

MYSTERIES.
MARSEILLES.



ZOLA.





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THE MYSTERIES OF MARSEILLES



THE MYSTERIES
OF MARSEILLES

A NOVEL

BY

EMILE ZOLA

TRANSLATED

BY

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London 1895

HUTCHINSON & CO.

34 PATERNOSTER ROW

PRINTED AT NIMEGUEEN (HOLLAND)
BY H. C. A. THIEME OF NIMEGUEEN (HOLLAND)
AND
PALBOT HOUSE, ARUNDEL STREET,
LONDON, W.C.

PQ
2509
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1895

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Paris 28 octobre 1894

Emile Zola

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CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HOW BLANCHE DE CAZALIS ELOPED WITH PHILIPPE CAYOL.	1
II. INTRODUCES THE HERO, MARIUS CAYOL	5
III. THERE ARE MENIALS IN THE CHURCH.	9
IV. HOW M. DE CAZALIS AVENGED HIS NIECE'S DISHONOUR.	16
V. BLANCHE JOURNEYS SIX LEAGUES ON FOOT, AND SEES A PROCESSION PASS BY	22
VI. THE HUNT AFTER THE LOVERS	26
VII. BLANCHE DENIES HER LOVE	34
VIII. THE IRON POT AGAINST THE EARTHEN EWER.	39
IX. M. DE GIROUSSE LETS HIS TONGUE WAG	46
X. A SCANDALOUS TRIAL	55
XI. HOW BLANCHE AND FINE FIND THEMSELVES FACE TO FACE	60
XII. WHICH SHOWS THAT A GAOLER'S HEART IS NOT ALWAYS MADE OF STONE	65
XIII. A BANKRUPTCY, AS THERE ARE MANY.	69
XIV. IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO SPEND THIRTY THOUSAND FRANCS A YEAR WHEN ONLY EARNING EIGHTEEN HUNDRED	75
XV. PHILIPPE REFUSES TO SAVE HIMSELF	81
XVI. THE USURERS	86
XVII. TWO SHAMELESS CHARACTERS	96
XVIII. IN WHICH THERE IS A GLIMMER OF HOPE	101
XIX. A RESPITE	105

PART II

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. M. SAUVAIRE, THE MASTER STEVEDORE	110
II. A MARSEILLAISE LORETTE	116
III. IN WHICH MADAME MERCIER SHOWS HER CLAWS	122
IV. WHICH SHOWS THAT THE POSITION OF A LORETTE IS NOT WITHOUT ITS TROUBLES	128
V. DOUGLAS, THE NOTARY	134
VI. MARIUS SEEKS UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR A HOUSE AND A MAN	140
VII. THE COWL DOES NOT MAKE THE FRIAR	148
VIII. THE NOTARY'S SPECULATIONS	152
IX. HOW AN UGLY MAN MAY BECOME HANDSOME	160
X. HOSTILITIES ARE RENEWED	169
XI. DOUGLAS IN THE PILORY AT MARSEILLES	173
XII. MARIUS LOSES HIS WITS	177
XIII. THE GAMBLING-HOUSES OF MARSEILLES	182
XIV. IN WHICH MARIUS WINS TEN THOUSAND FRANCS	186
XV. HOW MARIUS HAD BLOOD ON HIS HANDS	195
XVI. MADEMOISELLE CLAIRE'S PRAYER-BOOK	203
XVII. IN WHICH SAUVAIRE MAKES UP HIS MIND TO HAVE HIS MONEV'S WORTH OF FUN	209
XVIII. HOW ABBÉ DONADÉI ELOPED WITH THE SISTER SOUL TO HIS OWN	214
XIX. PHILIPPE'S RANSOM	220
XX. THE ESCAPE	220

PART III

I. THE CONSPIRACY	232
II. M. DE CAZALIS HAS A PLAN	237
III. WHICH TELLS OF THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY A PIECE OF WHITE RAG	241
IV. IN WHICH M. DE CAZALIS RUNS THE RISK OF LOSING HIS HEAD WHILE LOSING HIS GREAT NEPHEW	250
V. IN WHICH BLANCHE BIDS FAREWELL TO THE WORLD	255

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI. A SPECTRE.	260
VII. M. DE CAZALIS YEARNNS FOR JOSEPH.	264
VIII. "OPEN, IN THE NAME OF THE LAW!"	268
IX. PARDON! PARDON!	274
X. THE INSURRECTION OF FEBRUARY, 1848	280
XI. IN WHICH MATHÉUS BECOMES A REPUBLICAN.	288
XII. THE REPUBLIC AT MARSEILLES	296
XIII. WHAT MATHÉUS UNDERSTOOD BY STRATEGY	304
XIV. THE RIOT	311
XV. IN WHICH MATHÉUS COMPLETES HIS WORK.	322
XVI. THE BARRICADES AT THE PLACE AUX ŒUFS	328
XVII. WHAT MATHÉUS, THE FORESEER, DID NOT FORESEE	338
XVIII. THE ATTACK.	345
XIX. IN WHICH MATHÉUS AT LAST GETS JOSEPH IN HIS ARMS.	354
XX. HOW PHILIPPE FIRED A LAST SHOT	359
XXI. THE DUEL	368
XXII. THE PUNISHMENT	378
XXIII. EPILOGUE	382

THE MYSTERIES OF MARSEILLES.

Part I.

CHAPTER I.

HOW BLANCHE DE CAZALIS ELOPED WITH PHILIPPE CAYOL.

TOWARDS the end of the month of May, 184—, a man about thirty years of age was walking rapidly along a footpath in the Saint Joseph quarter, near the Aygalades. He had left his horse in the care of a small cultivator occupying a neighbouring farm, and was going in the direction of a large, solidly-built square house, a kind of country château, such as are to be found on the hills of Provence.

The man turned aside to avoid the château and went and seated himself in a pine wood, which spread out behind the building. Then, anxious and feverish, he pushed aside the branches and glanced along the pathways apparently awaiting someone with impatience. Now and again he rose and took a few steps, then rescaled himself all in a tremble.

This man, who was tall and of strange appearance, wore bushy black whiskers. His long face, marked by energetic lineaments, displayed a kind of violent and passionate beauty. Suddenly his eyes softened and a tender smile spread over his thick lips. A young girl had just issued from the château, and, stooping as though to hide herself, was hastening towards the pine wood.

Rosy and breathless, she reached the shelter of the trees. She was barely sixteen years old. Beneath the blue ribbons of her straw hat, her young face was smiling with a joyous and at the same time a startled expression.

Her fair hair fell over her shoulders; her little hands, pressed to her breast, were endeavouring to calm her throbbing heart.

"How late you are, Blanche!" said the young man. "I had almost giving up hoping to see you."

And he seated her on the moss beside him.

"Forgive me, Philippe," answered the young girl. "My uncle has gone to Aix to purchase an estate; but I could not get rid of my governess."

She yielded herself to the embrace of him she adored, and the two lovers enjoyed one of those long talks which are at once so silly and so sweet. Blanche was like a big child playing with her lover as she would have done with a doll. Philippe, now ardent and speechless, was pressing the young girl to him and gazing upon her with all the transports of love and ambition.

And whilst they were seated there, oblivious of the world, they noticed, on raising their heads, some peasants who were following a neighbouring path, whilst watching them, and laughing. Blanche, full of alarm, drew away from her lover.

"I am lost!" she exclaimed, turning quite pale. "Those men will inform my uncle. Ah! for pity's sake, Philippe, save me!"

The young man jumped up on hearing her cry.

"If you wish me to save you," he replied, impetuously, "you must follow me! Come, let us fly together! Tomorrow, your uncle will consent to our marriage, and we shall be united for evermore."

"Fly, fly," repeated the child. "Ah! I fear I have not the courage to do so. I am too weak, too timid."

"I will sustain you, Blanche. We will live a life of love."

Blanche, without hearing, without replying, let her head drop on Philippe's shoulder.

"Oh! I dread, I dread the convent," she resumed, after a time, in a low voice. "You will marry me, you will love me always?"

"I love you—See, I am on my knees."

Then, closing her eyes, yielding, Blanche hastily de-

scended the slope, clinging to the arm of Philippe who had risen. After she had gone some distance, she looked back a last time at the home she was leaving, and a poignant emotion filled her eyes with tears.

A minute's error had sufficed to throw her into the young man's arms, exhausted and confiding. She loved Philippe with all the warmth of a first passion, with all the folly of her inexperience. She was running away like a school-girl, voluntarily, and without weighing the terrible consequences of her flight. And Philippe was carrying her off, intoxicated with his victory and quivering at feeling her moving and panting at his side.

At first he thought of hastening to Marseilles to procure a vehicle. But he was afraid to leave her alone on the high road, and he preferred to go with her on foot as far as his mother's country-house, which was situated quite a league away, in the Saint Just quarter.

Philippe had to leave his horse behind, and the two lovers started off bravely together. They passed through meadows, ploughed fields and pine woods, taking short cuts and walking very quickly. It was about four o'clock. The sun, clear and scorching, cast before them broad sheets of light. And they hastened along in the warm air, urged on by the madness which was eating into their hearts. As they passed by, the labourers raised their heads and watched their flight with amazement.

It did not take them an hour to reach the home of Philippe's mother. Blanche, quite tired out, seated herself on a stone bench beside the door, whilst the young man went to see if the coast was clear. He then returned and conducted her to his room. He had begged Ayasse, a gardener whom his mother was employing that day, to fetch a vehicle from Marseilles.

Both were still a prey to the excitement of their flight. Whilst awaiting the vehicle, they remained silent and anxious. Philippe, having led Blanche to a little chair, knelt at her feet and gazed lingeringly at her, seeking to reassure her by gently kissing the hand she yielded to him.

"You cannot remain in that light gown," he said, after

a time. "Would you like to dress up as a man?" Blanche smiled. She felt childlike joy at the thought of disguising herself.

"My brother is rather short," continued Philippe. "You can put on some of his things."

It made them quite merry. The young girl dressed herself, laughing the while. She was charmingly awkward, and Philippe eagerly kissed the blushes on her cheeks. When she was ready, she had quite the appearance of a little man, of a youngster of twelve. She had great difficulty in confining her mass of hair in the hat, and her lover's hands trembled as he gathered the rebellious locks together.

Ayasse at length returned with the vehicle. He consented to receive the fugitives in his own home at Saint Barnabé. Philippe took what money he possessed, and all three entered the carriage which they left at the Pont du Jarret, continuing the journey to the gardener's house on foot.

It was now twilight. Transparent shadows were falling from the pale heavens, whilst acrid odours rose from the earth, still warm with the last rays of the sun. Then a vague fear took possession of Blanche. Her heart was sinking within her, she sought to gain time.

"Listen," said she to Philippe, "I will write to my confessor, Abbé Chastanier. He will go and see my uncle, to obtain my pardon and his consent to our marriage. I think I should not be so frightened were I your wife."

Philippe smiled at the tender simplicity of the last words.

"Write to Abbé Chastanier," he answered. "For my part, I will send my brother our address. He will come to-morrow and will take your letter."

It was thus that Blanche de Cazalis eloped with Philippe Cayol, one fine May evening.

Ah! sweet and terrible night! which was doomed to overwhelm the lovers with wretchedness, and bring them nothing but suffering and regret for the rest of their lives.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCES THE HERO, MARIUS CAYOL.

MARIUS CAYOL, the brother of Blanche's lover, was about twenty-five years old. He was short, thin and puny. His light yellow face, with its long narrow black eyes, was lighted up at times with a kind smile of self-devotion and resignation. He walked with a slight stoop, and the hesitation and timidity of a child. But the hatred of evil, the love of uprightness, that filled his being, made him appear almost handsome.

He had assumed the hardships of the family, leaving his brother to follow his ambitious and passionate instincts.

He made himself quite insignificant beside him, saying, generally, that as he was the ugly one he ought not to emerge from his ugliness; he added that it was excusable for Philippe to like to display his fine figure and the vigorous beauty of his countenance. Moreover, when necessary, he could be severe towards the great impetuous child, who was his senior, and whom he treated with the remonstrances and affection of a father.

Their mother, now a widow, was not at all wealthy. She had a difficulty in making both ends meet on the remnants of her dowry, the major portion of which her husband had lost in business. This money, deposited at a banker's, yielded her a small income which had enabled her to bring up her two sons. But, when they had reached man's estate, she showed them her empty hands, and placed them face to face with the difficulties of life. And the two brothers, thrown thus into the struggle for existence, led on by their different natures, followed diametrically opposite courses.

Philippe, who had an appetite for wealth and liberty, could not bend himself to labour. He wished to attain fortune by the shortest road, and had visions of making a rich marriage. That was, in his idea, an excellent expedient, a rapid means of obtaining an income and a pretty wife. So he passed his life in the sunshine, became

amorous, and even slightly dissipated. He experienced an extreme delight in being well-dressed, in displaying his elegant, hasty manners, his eccentric garments, his love-laden glances and speeches, about Marseilles. His mother and brother, who spoilt him, endeavoured to provide for his whims. Moreover, Philippe was acting in good faith: he adored women, and it seemed natural to him to be beloved and carried off some day by a rich and beautiful young girl of noble birth.

Whilst his brother was exhibiting his fine looks, Marius had taken a situation as clerk in the office of M. Martelly, a ship-owner residing in the Rue de la Darse. He felt quite happy hidden away in his office, his sole ambition being to earn a modest competence, and to live a peaceful and unostentatious life. Besides this, he felt a secret pleasure in assisting his mother and brother. The money he earned was dear to him, because he could give it away and bestow happiness with it, and himself taste the profound delights of self-sacrifice. He had chosen in life the straight way, the painful path which leads to peace, joy, and self-respect.

The young man was on the point of starting for his office, when he received the letter in which his brother informed him of his elopement with Mademoiselle de Cazalis. It filled him with painful surprise, and he beheld at a glance the frightful chasm into the depths of which the lovers had cast themselves. He hastened without loss of time to Saint Barnabé.

At the door of Ayasse the gardener's house was a vine trained to form an arbour, whilst two big mulberry trees, pruned to the shape of parasols, spread their knotty branches around and cast their shade upon the entry. Marius found Philippe seated in the arbour, gazing lovingly upon Blanche de Cazalis beside him. The young girl, already weary, was silently regretting what they had done.

The interview was a painful one, full of anguish and shame. Philippe rose up.

"You blame me?" he asked, holding his hand out to his brother.

"Yes, I blame you," answered Marius energetically. "You have committed a base action. Pride has led you away and passion has ruined you. You have not thought of the evils you will bring on your family and yourself."

Philippe protested.

"You are frightened," he said bitterly. "For myself, I did not stop to consider. I loved Blanche and she returned my love. I said to her: 'Will you come with me?' and she came. That is the whole story. We are neither of us deserving of censure."

"Why lie?" replied Marius with greater severity. "You're not a child, and you know very well that your duty was to protect this young lady against herself: you should have stayed her on the brink of wrong, prevented her accompanying you. Ah! don't talk to me of love. I recognise only the love of justice and duty."

Philippe smiled disdainfully, and drew Blanche to his breast.

"My poor Marius," said he, "you are a good fellow but you have never been in love and do not understand its fever. This is my defence."

And he allowed Blanche to embrace him as she clung quiveringly to him. The poor child felt well enough that her only hope was in this man. She had given herself away, she belonged to him. And now she worshipped him almost as a slave, lovingly and in fear.

Marius, in despair, felt that he would do no more good in talking reason to the lovers. He determined to follow his own instincts, and asked for full details of the unhappy affair. Philippe quietly answered his questions.

"I have known Blanche for nearly eight months," he said. "I met her first at a public festival. She was smiling in the crowd, and I fancied her smile was meant for me. Since that day I have loved her and have sought every opportunity of meeting and addressing her."

"Haven't you written to her?" asked Marius.

"Yes, many times."

"Where are your letters?"

"She has burnt them. Each time I wrote, I bought a

bouquet of Fine, the florist on the Cours Saint Louis, and slipped my letter in amongst the flowers. Marguerite, the milkwoman, used to take Blanche the bouquets."

"And did your letters remain unanswered?"

"At first, yes, Blanche refused the flowers. Then, she accepted them; and finally, she ended by answering me. I was madly in love. I dreamed of marrying her and of loving her for ever."

Marius shrugged his shoulders and drew Philippe on one side. He there continued the investigation with more harshness in his voice.

"You're either a fool or a liar," said he quietly. "You know very well that M. de Cazalis, deputy, millionaire, all-powerful in Marseilles, would never have given his niece to Philippe Cayol, poor, plebeian, and republican in addition to his other drawbacks. Confess that you have reckoned on the scandal that your elopement will occasion to force Blanche's uncle to come to terms."

"Well! and what then?" retorted Philippe, impetuously. "Blanche loves me, and I have in no way forced her will. She has freely chosen me for her husband."

"Yes, yes, I am aware of all that. You have said it too often for me not to know how much of it I should believe. But you have not considered M. de Cazalis' anger, which will fall with terrible force on you and your relations. I know the man; last night he no doubt exhibited his outraged pride to all Marseilles. The best thing you can do is to take the young lady back to her home at Saint Joseph."

"No, I will not, I cannot. Blanche would never dare return home. She had only been at the country-house about a week; I was in the habit of seeing her twice a day, in a little pine-wood. Her uncle knew nothing, and it must have been a great shock to him. It is impossible for us to go there at present."

"Well! listen, give me the letter for Abbé Chastanier. I will see him, and, if necessary, will go with him to call on M. de Cazalis. We must hush up the scandal. I have a task to perform, the task of repairing the wrong you have done. Promise me you will not leave this house, that you will await here my further instructions."

"I promise you to wait, if no danger threatens me."

Marius took Philippe's hand and looked him loyally in the face.

"Love this child well," he said, in a deep voice, pointing to Blanche; "you will never be able to undo the wrong you have done her."

He was about to take his leave, when Mademoiselle de Cazalis came forward. She clasped her hands in supplication, stifling her sobs.

"If you see my uncle, sir," she stammered, "be sure and tell him that I love him. I cannot account for what has happened. I would like to remain Philippe's wife and to return to my home in his company."

Marius slightly bowed.

"Have hope," he said.

And he went off sad and troubled, feeling that his words were a lie, and that to hope would be madness.

CHAPTER III.

THERE ARE MENIALS IN THE CHURCH.

ON reaching Marseilles, Marius directed his steps to the church of Saint Victor, to which Abbé Chastanier was attached. It is one of the oldest churches in Marseilles; its dark, high, and crenulated walls give it the appearance of a fortress. The rough people of the port hold it in particular veneration.

The young fellow found the priest in the sacristy. He was a tall old man, with a long emaciated face, pale as wax; his sad eyes had a fixed look of suffering and misery. He had just returned from a funeral, and was slowly taking off his surplice.

His history was a short and sad one. Born of peasant parents, and as gentle and innocent as a child, he had taken orders to satisfy the pious wish of his mother. In becoming a priest he had desired to perform an act of humility, of absolute devotion. He believed, in his simplicity, that a minister of God should bury himself

in the infiniteness of divine love, renounce the ambitions and intrigues of the world, and live in the heart of the sanctuary, absolving sins with one hand and dispensing charity with the other.

Ah! poor abbé! how they let him see that the simple-minded are only fit to suffer and remain in obscurity! He was soon to learn that ambition is a sacerdotal virtue, and that young priests often love God for the sake of the worldly favours that His church distributes. He beheld all his comrades of the seminary struggling tooth and nail. He assisted at these internal battles, those secret intrigues which turn a diocese into a turbulent little kingdom. And, as he remained humbly on his knees, as he did not seek to please the feminine portion of the congregation, as he asked for nothing and appeared piously stupid, he was endowed with a miserable living, thrown to him as one casts a bone to a dog.

He remained thus, for forty years, in a little village situated between Aubagne and Cassis. His church was a kind of barn, lime-washed and icily bare; in winter, when the wind blew in one of the window-panes, the interior was chilled for weeks together, for the poor priest did not always possess the few coppers necessary to replace the broken glass. Yet he never complained, he lived peacefully amidst his wretchedness and solitude. He even experienced great joy in suffering, in feeling himself kin to the beggars of his parish.

He was sixty years old, when one of his sisters, a workwoman at Marseilles, became an invalid. She wrote to him, beseeching him to come to her. The old priest therefore begged his bishop to find him a small place in one of the city churches. He was kept waiting the fulfilment of his modest request for several months, when at length he received a call to Saint Victor. There he had to undertake, so to say, all the roughest work, all the labour that brought least renown and least profit. He prayed over the coffins of the poor and led them to the cemetery; he even at times fulfilled the duties of sacristan.

It was at this period that he began really to suffer. So long as he had remained in his desert, he had been able

to be simple, poor, and old at his ease. Now, he felt that his poverty and old age, his gentleness and simplicity were looked upon as a crime. And his heart was rent when he understood that there could be menials in the Church. He saw well enough that he was looked upon with derision and scorn. He bowed his head still more, becoming yet more humble, weeping over his faith, shaken by the words and deeds of the worldly priests about him.

Fortunately of an evening, he had some happy moments. He nursed his sister, consoling himself in his own way by devoting himself to another. He surrounded the poor invalid with a thousand little joys. Then another pleasure had been vouchsafed him: M. de Cazalis, who had no faith in young abbés, had selected him to be his niece's spiritual adviser. The old priest seldom attracted a lady penitent and scarcely ever heard a confession. He was moved to tears on the receipt of the deputy's proposal, and he questioned, he loved Blanche as though she had been his own child.

Marius handed him the young girl's letter and watched his face for a trace of the emotions the reading of it was about to cause him. He beheld the signs of acute grief. Yet the priest did not appear to experience that surprise which results from unexpected news, and Marius concluded that Blanche had mentioned in confession her growing affection for Philippe.

"You did well to count upon me, sir," said Abbé Chastanier to Marius. "But I am very weak and not at all skilful. I should have displayed more energy."

The poor man's head and hands shook with that sad gentle trembling peculiar to old people.

"I am at your disposal," he continued. "How can I assist the unhappy child?"

"Sir," replied Marius, "I am the brother of the young madman who has eloped with Mademoiselle de Cazalis, and I have sworn to right the wrong, to stifle the scandal. Will you join with me. The young lady's honour is gone if her uncle has already denounced the affair to the authorities. Go, therefore, and find him, endeavour to

calm his anger, and tell him his niece shall promptly be restored to him."

"Why did you not bring her with you? I know how passionate M. de Cazalis can be. Nothing but certainty will satisfy him."

"It is just that anger which has frightened my brother. Besides, this is no time for reasoning. We are overwhelmed with accomplished facts. Believe me, I feel as indignant as you, and fully understand how disgraceful my brother's behaviour has been. But, for pity's sake, let us do something."

"Very well," said the abbé simply, "I will go wherever you wish."

They went along the Boulevard de la Corderie and reached the Cours Bonaparte where the deputy's town house was situated. M. de Cazalis, a prey to terrible anger and despair, had returned to Marseilles early in the morning following the elopement. Abbé Chastanier stopped Marius at the door of the house.

"Do not come in," said he. "Your visit might be considered an insult. Let me manage, and wait for me here."

Marius walked feverishly up and down the pavement for a good hour. He would have preferred to have gone in, to have explained matters himself and have asked for pardon in Philippe's name. Whilst the fate of his family was under discussion in that house, he had to remain there, outside, inactive, and a prey to all the agony of waiting. At length Abbé Chastanier came out. He had been weeping; his eyes were red, his lips quivering.

"M. de Cazalis will listen to nothing," he said, in a troubled voice. "I found him in a blind rage. He has already been to the crown-attorney."

The poor priest did not mention that M. de Cazalis had received him with the bitterest reproaches, venting his anger upon him, and accusing him, in his rage, of having given evil counsel to his niece. The abbé bent beneath the storm; he almost fell on his knees, not seeking to defend himself, but imploring the deputy to take pity on the others.

"Tell me all!" exclaimed Marius, in despair.

"It appears," the priest replied, "that the man with whom your brother left his horse, assisted M. de Cazalis in his search. A complaint was lodged at an early hour this morning, and the police have been to ransack your lodging in the Rue Sainte, and your mother's house at Saint Just."

"Good heavens! good heavens!" sighed Marius.

"M. de Cazalis swears that he will crush the whole of your family. I vainly endeavoured to bring him to a kindlier frame of mind. He talks of having your mother arrested."

"My mother! Whatever for?"

"He makes out that she is an accomplice, that she assisted your brother in carrying off Mademoiselle Blanche."

"What can we do, how prove the falsity of such an accusation? Ah! wretched Philippe! It will be the death of our mother."

And Marius sobbed aloud, his face buried in his hands. Abbé Chastanier beheld his fit of despair with tender pity. He understood the goodness and probity of the poor lad, who wept thus in the open street.

"Come, my child," he said, "be courageous."

"You are right, father," exclaimed Marius, "it is courage I need. I was weak, this morning. I should have wrested the young lady from Philippe, and have taken her back to her uncle. An inner voice bade me perform that act of justice, and I am punished for not having obeyed its prompting. They talked to me of love, passion, marriage, and I allowed their words to move me."

They remained a moment silent, and then Marius said suddenly:

"Come with me. Between us, we shall be strong enough to separate them."

"I am willing," the abbé replied.

And, without even thinking to take a cab, they followed the Rue de Breteuil, the canal quay, the Napoleon quay, and then ascended the Cannebière. They walked hurriedly along, without speaking. When they reached the Cours Saint Louis, the sound of a fresh young voice caused

them to turn their heads. It was Fine, the flower-girl, calling Marius.

Joséphine Cougourdan, familiarly known by the pet name of Fine, was one of those Marseilles brunettes, small and plump, whose refined features have preserved all the delicate purity of their Grecian ancestors. Her round head stood upon slightly drooping shoulders; her pale face bore an expression of disdainful scorn beneath her braided black hair; passionate energy was visible in her large melancholy eyes which were softened now and again by a smile. She was from twenty-two to twenty-four years of age.

When only fifteen she found herself an orphan with a young brother, not more than ten years old, dependent upon her. She bravely took her mother's place, and three days after the funeral, whilst still suffering from her great grief, she was seated in a kiosk on the Cours Saint Louis making up and selling nosegays, sobbing the while.

The little florist soon became the spoilt child of Marseilles. Her youth and grace secured her popularity. Her flowers, it was said, had a sweeter smell than those sold elsewhere. Gallants swarmed around her; she sold them her roses, violets, and carnations, but that was all. And it is thus that she was able to bring up her brother Cadet and apprentice him, when eighteen years old, to a master stevedore.

The two young people lived on the Place aux Œufs, in the centre of the labouring-class quarter. Cadet was now a big fellow employed at the docks; Fine, grown handsomer and having arrived at womanhood, had the lively gait and careless caressing way of Marseilles women.

She was acquainted with the Cayols through having sold them flowers, and she would speak to them with that tender familiarity which springs from the warm air and gentle language of Provence. Besides which, if all must be told, Philippe had latterly so often bought her roses, that she had ended by feeling a slight tremor when he approached her. The young man, who was by instinct an admirer of the sex, laughed with her and gazed at her so intently that he made her blush, half declaring his

love, the while, and all this simply not to forget the ways of wooing. The poor girl, who up till then had made short work of would-be lovers, fell a victim to this flirtation. At night-time she dreamed of Philippe, and wondered, with anguish, whatever he could do with all the flowers she sold him.

When Marius approached her he found her high-coloured and troubled. She was half hidden by her nosegays and looked adorably fresh beneath the broad lappets of her little lace cap.

"Monsieur Marius," she asked hesitatingly, "is what every one is saying this morning true? That your brother has eloped with a young lady?"

"Who told you that?" asked Marius, quickly.

"Why, every one. The rumour is all over the place."

And as the young man seemed as troubled as herself, and stood there without speaking, Fine added with slight bitterness:

"I was told that Monsieur Philippe was a flirt. His tongue was too soft for his words to be true."

She was on the point of weeping, but was forcing back her tears. With painful resignation she then added more gently:

"I can see that you are in trouble. If you should need me, do not fail to let me know."

Marius looked her in the face and seemed to guess the agony of her heart.

"You are a brave girl!" he exclaimed. "I thank you, and will perhaps avail myself of your services."

He heartily shook her hand, as he would have done to a comrade, and hastened to rejoin Abbé Chastanier who was waiting for him at the edge of the pavement.

"We have no time to lose," he said. "The story is spreading all over Marseilles. We must take a cab."

Night was falling when they reached Saint Barnabé. They only found the gardener Ayasse's wife, who was knitting in a low room. This woman quietly informed them that the gentleman and young lady had become alarmed, and had gone off on foot in the direction of Aix. She added that her son had accompanied them to guide them amongst the hills.

The last hope was thus dead. Marius, completely overcome, returned to Marseilles without hearing the encouraging words Abbé Chastanier addressed to him. He was thinking of the fatal consequences of Philippe's madness; he was rebelling against the misfortunes about to befall his family.

"My child," said the priest, as he left him, "I am only a poor man, but dispose of me as you will. I will go and pray to God for you."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW M. DE CAZALIS AVENGED HIS NIECE'S DISHONOUR.

THE lovers had eloped on a Wednesday. On the following Friday all Marseilles knew the story; the gossips on their doorsteps embellished the adventure with many dramatic details; the nobility was indignant, whilst the middleclass folk had a hearty laugh. M. de Cazalis, in his rage, had done everything to increase the racket and turn his niece's flight into a frightful scandal.

Clear-sighted people easily accounted for his show of anger. M. de Cazalis was a deputy of the opposition and had been returned at Marseilles by a majority composed of a few liberals, some priests, and members of the aristocracy. Devoted to the cause of legitimacy, bearing one of the most ancient names of Provence, bowing humbly before all-powerful Mother Church, he had experienced considerable repugnance in flattering the liberals and receiving their votes. In his eyes they were merely varlets, servants, fit only to be whipped in the public streets. His indomitable pride suffered at the thought of lowering itself to their level.

Yet he had been obliged to bow before them. The liberals noised abroad the services they were rendering, and for a time a pretence was made of disdaining their assistance; but when they talked of intervening in the election by naming one of their own party as a candidate, M. de Cazalis was forced by circumstances to bury his

hatred in the depths of his heart, promising himself his revenge on some future occasion. Then the most shameless jobbery was resorted to; the clergy took the field, votes were secured right and left, thanks to innumerable civilities and promises, with the result that M. de Cazalis was elected.

And here was Philippe Cayol, one of the leaders of the liberal party fallen into his hands. At last he would be able to gratify his hatred on the person of one of the louts who had bargained with him for his return to the Chamber. He should be made to pay for all; his relatives should be ruined and plunged into despair; and as for him, he should be thrown into prison, precipitated from the height of his dream of love on to the straw of a dungeon.

What! a little nobody had dared to win the love of the niece of a Cazalis! He had led her away with him, and now they were both roving along the roads, attending the hedge-school of love. It was a scandal to be made much of. An ordinary person would perhaps have preferred to hush it up, to conceal the deplorable adventure as far as possible; but a Cazalis, deputy and millionaire, was possessed of sufficient influence and pride to proclaim the shame of a relative abroad without a blush.

What mattered a young girl's honour! All the world might know that Blanche de Cazalis had eloped with Philippe Cayol, but no one should be able to say that she was his wife, that she had degraded herself by marrying a poor devil without a handle to his name. Pride required that the child should remain dishonoured, and that her dishonour should be posted on the walls of Marseilles.

M. de Cazalis had bills placarded in all the squares of the city, promising ten thousand francs reward to whosoever would bring him his niece and her seducer bound hand and foot. When one loses a pure-bred dog it is also usual to advertise for it.

Among the upper classes, the scandal spread still more noisily. M. de Cazalis disseminated his rage everywhere. He availed himself of the influence of his friends, of the clergy, and nobility. As guardian of Blanche who was an

orphan, and as trustee of her fortune, he urged on the authorities in their search, and drew up the indictment of the accused. It might be said that he took pains to procure the greatest possible publicity for the gratis show about to begin.

One of the first measures he resorted to was to secure the arrest of Philippe Cayol's mother. When the crown-attorney presented himself she replied to all questions that she did not know her son's whereabouts. Her confusion, her anguish, her mother's fears, which made her hesitate, were no doubt considered so many proofs of complicity. She was sent to prison, more as a hostage, and possibly in the hope that her son would surrender himself in order to secure her release.

When Marius heard of his mother's arrest he almost went mad. He knew she was in delicate health, and pictured her, with terror, shut up in a bare and icy cold cell; she would die there, tortured by all the pangs of suffering and despair.

Marius was also suspected at the outset. But his firm answers, and the bail that his employer, the ship-owner Martelly, offered on his behalf, saved him from imprisonment. He wanted to remain free in order to work for the salvation of his family.

Little by little his upright mind was able to properly weigh the facts. At first, he had been overwhelmed by Philippe's guilt, he had seen only the irreparable wrong his brother had done. And he had humbled himself, desiring solely to calm Blanche's uncle and give him every reparation possible. But, in face of the deputy's rigour, of the scandal he was raising, the young man had a revulsion of feeling. He had seen the fugitives, and knew that Blanche was voluntarily accompanying Philippe, and he was indignant at hearing the latter accused of abduction. Hard words flew around him: his brother was called a scoundrel, a villain, and his mother did not come off much better. In consequence, his love of truth prompted him to defend the lovers, to take the part of the fugitives even against the authorities. Besides which, the deputy's noisy accusations sickened him. He felt that true grief

is dumb, and that an affair in which a young girl's honour is at stake should not be ventilated in public. And he felt all this, not because he wished to see his brother escape chastisement, but because his delicacy was wounded by all this publicity given to a child's shame. Moreover, he knew the meaning of the deputy's rage; by striking Philippe, he was striking far more the republican than the abductor.

Marius was thus in his turn overcome with anger. He was insulted through his family—his mother cast into prison, his brother tracked like a wild beast, his dearest affections dragged in the mud—they were the victims of bad faith and passion. At this he held up his head again. The guilt was not all on the side of the ambitious lover who had eloped with a wealthy young lady, it was equally the portion of him who was stirring up Marseilles, and who intended using all his power to satisfy his pride. Since the authorities had undertaken to punish the first, Marius swore that sooner or later he would punish the second, and that in the meantime he would upset his plans and endeavour to counterbalance the influence his wealth and birth gave him.

From this moment, Marius displayed febrile energy, he devoted himself entirely to the preservation of his mother and brother. Unfortunately he was unable to learn what had become of Philippe. Two days after the flight, he had received a letter in which the fugitive implored him to send him a thousand francs to defray the expenses of his journey. The letter was dated from Lambesc.

Philippe had there found a few days' hospitality in the house of M. de Grousse, an old friend of the family. M. de Grousse, who was the son of a former member of the parliament of Aix, was born in the midst of revolution. At his first breath he had inhaled the burning atmosphere of '89, and his blood had always preserved a little of the revolutionary fever. He felt uncomfortable in his mansion on the Cours at Aix; in his eyes the nobility of the town seemed possessed of such inordinate pride, such deplorable inertness, that he judged it severely and preferred to live at a distance from it. His upright mind, his love of logic,

had helped him to accept the new order of things, and he willingly held out his hand to the people and accommodated himself to the tendencies of modern society. At one time he had thought of founding a factory, and of exchanging his title of count for that of manufacturer, considering that nowadays the only nobility is the nobility of talent and labour. And as he preferred living alone, away from his equals, he stayed the greater part of the year on an estate he owned near the little town of Lambesc. It was there that he had harboured the fugitives.

Marius was overwhelmed by Philippe's request. His savings did not amount to more than six hundred francs. He bestirred himself, and during two days endeavoured to borrow the remainder of the amount. One morning, when he was beginning to despair, Fine called upon him. He had confided his trouble to the young woman the day before; she had been for ever on his footsteps since Philippe's flight and constantly asking for news of his brother, being apparently most anxious to know whether the young lady was still with him. Fine laid five hundred francs on a table.

"There," she said, with a blush. "You can return it to me later on. It's some money I put aside to purchase my brother's discharge, if he was drawn in the conscription."

Marius would not accept it.

"You're making me waste my time," resumed Fine, with charming abruptness. "I must hurry back to my flowers. But if you don't mind, I'll call here every morning for news."

And she hastened away.

Marius sent the thousand francs. Then he heard nothing further, but passed a whole fortnight in complete ignorance of the march of events. He knew Philippe was being relentlessly hunted down, and that was all. He would not believe the grotesque or frightful stories that were current with the public. He had enough with his own fears, without being frightened at the gossip of the town. He had never in his life before suffered so much. His anxiety nearly drove him mad: the least sound

frightened him; he was for ever on the alert as though expecting some bad news at any moment. He heard that Philippe had gone to Toulon and had almost been arrested there. The fugitives, it was said, had then returned to Aix. There, all trace of them was lost. Had they attempted to cross the frontier? Had they remained in hiding among the hills? No one seemed to know.

Marius was all the more anxious because he had been obliged to neglect his work at the ship-owner Martelly's. If he had not been fixed to his desk by duty, he would have hastened to Philippe's assistance, and would have personally occupied himself with his safety. But he dared not leave the business where his services were required. M. Martelly showed him quite a paternal sympathy. A widower for several years past and living with one of his sisters, who was twenty-three years of age, he treated Marius like a son. On the morrow of the scandal raised by M. de Cazalis, the ship-owner called the young man into his private office.

"Ah! my friend," he exclaimed, "this is a very unpleasant matter. Your brother is done for. We shall never be strong enough to save him from the terrible consequences of his folly!"

M. Martelly belonged to the liberal party, and was noted for the southern violence of his opinions. He had already had some spars with M. de Cazalis, and therefore knew his man. His strict probity, his immense fortune, placed him beyond all attack; but he possessed the haughtiness of his liberalism, and took a sort of pride in never making use of his power. He advised Marius to keep quiet and await events; he would render him all his assistance, once the struggle was started. Marius, consumed by his fever, was about to ask him for leave of absence, when Fine, all in tears, appeared one morning before him.

"The gentleman has been arrested!" she exclaimed, between her sobs. "They found him, with the young lady, in a cottage in the Trois-bons-Dieux quarter, about a league from Aix."

And, as Marius, greatly agitated, rushed downstairs to make inquiries, which only too fully bore out the truth of

Fine's statement, she, still in tears, smiled and said in a low voice :

"At any rate, the young lady is no longer with him."

CHAPTER V.

BLANCHE JOURNEYS SIX LEAGUES ON FOOT, AND SEES A PROCESSION PASS BY.

BLANCHE and Philippe left the gardener's house at dusk, at about half-past seven o'clock. During the day, they had noticed gendarmes on the road; they were assured that they would be arrested that evening, and fright drove them from this their first retreat. Philippe put on a peasant's blouse, whilst Blanche borrowed a workwoman's dress from the gardener's wife, a red cotton gown with a flowery pattern and a black apron; she put a yellow check fichu round her breast and a big coarse straw hat on her head. Victor, the son of the house, a lad of fifteen, accompanied them, to show them the way across the fields to the Aix road.

The warm night air was full of murmurs. A hot breath rose from the earth, counteracting the fresh breeze which was wafted, now and again, from the Mediterranean. A bright light, like the reflection of a fire, still illumined the west; the rest of the sky was of a violet blue, gradually growing paler in colour, while the stars appeared one by one in the night, similar to the flickering lights of a distant town.

The fugitives hastened along with bowed heads, and without exchanging a word. They were in a hurry to find themselves amidst the solitude of the hills. So long as they were crossing the outskirts of Marseilles, they met a few passers-by, whom they eyed with distrust. At last the open country spread out before them, and the only human beings they encountered were now and again some grave shepherds standing at the edge of the path, watching their flocks.

And their flight continued in the gloom and the emotional silence of the serene night. Vague sounds floated

around them; pebbles rolled beneath their feet with a noise that filled them with uneasiness. The sleeping country-side extended like a black mass in the monotony of the darkness. Blanche, affrighted, clung to Philippe, hastening her little footsteps in order to keep up with him; she heaved deep sighs as she recalled the peacefulness of her nights at home.

Then they reached the hills, with the deep ravines which had to be crossed. Around Marseilles the roads are soft and easy; but out in the country one meets those rocky ridges which cut up the whole centre of Provence into narrow, sterile valleys. Uncultivated plains, stony slopes, with here and there some sorry tufts of thyme and lavender, now extended before the fugitives in all their desolate mournfulness. The paths wound up and down the sides of the hills; fallen rock now and again blocked the way; beneath the bluish serenity of the heavens, one could have fancied it a sea of pebbles, an ocean of stones stricken with eternal immobility in the midst of a hurricane.

Victor, leading the way, softly whistled a Provençal air as he jumped from rock to rock with the agility of a chamois; he had grown up amid this desert and was acquainted with its innermost recesses. Blanche and Philippe followed him laboriously; the young man was supporting the girl, whose feet were cut by the sharp stones on the way. She did not complain, and whenever her lover gazed inquiringly into her face in the transparent darkness, she smiled to him with sad sweetness.

They had just passed Septème, when the young girl, worn out, sank to the ground. The moon slowly rising in the heavens lit up her pale face bathed in tears. Philippe bent over her in great distress.

"You are crying," he exclaimed, "you are in pain, my poor, darling child! Ah! it was cowardly of me to keep you with me, was it not?"

"Do not say that, Philippe," replied Blanche. "I am weeping because I am a miserable girl. See, I can scarcely walk. We should have done better to have fallen on our knees before my uncle and have implored him with clasped hands."

She regained her feet with an effort, and they continued their journey over the arid hills. It was far different from the gay and foolish escapade of a couple of lovers; it was a dismal flight, full of anxiety, the flight of a guilty couple, silent and quaking with fear. They traversed the Gardanne district, struggling during five hours against the obstacles of the way. At last, they decided to descend to the high road leading to Aix, and there they were able to proceed more freely. The dust, however, nearly blinded them.

When they reached the top of the Arc hill, they dismissed Victor. Blanche had covered six leagues among the rocks, on foot, in less than six hours; she sat down on a stone seat at the gate of the town, and declared that she could not proceed any further. Philippe, who feared to be arrested if he remained at Aix, went in search of a vehicle; he came across a woman driving a light cart who agreed to give him and Blanche a lift as far as Lambesc, whither she was bound.

In spite of the jolting, Blanche fell into a sound sleep and did not wake up until they were nearing their destination. This sleep calmed the fever of her blood; she felt soothed and stronger. The lovers alighted from the vehicle just as day was breaking, a fresh and radiant dawn which filled them with hope. The terrors of the night had vanished; the fugitives had forgotten the Septème rocks, and were walking side by side in the damp grass, intoxicated with their youth and love.

Not finding M. de Grousse, of whom Philippe had intended asking hospitality, they went to an inn, where they were at last able to enjoy a day of peace. On the morrow, Philippe saw M. de Grousse who had returned. He told him the whole story and asked his advice.

"The deuce!" exclaimed the old nobleman, "your matter is serious. You know, my friend, you're but a clodhopper; a hundred years ago, M. de Cazalis would have hanged you for daring to touch his niece; now-a-days, he can only have you cast into prison. And you may be sure he won't omit to do so."

"But what had I better do now?"

"What had you better do? Why, restore the young

lady to her uncle, and make for the frontier as fast as you can."

"You know very well that I shall never do that."

"Very well, then just wait quietly until you're arrested. I've no other advice to give you. So there!"

Beneath a friendly abruptness, M. de Girousse hid the kindest heart in the world. As Philippe, confused by the curtness of his reception, was about to take his departure, he called him back, and, taking his hand, continued with slight bitterness:

"My duty would be to have you arrested. I belong to that nobility you have just insulted. Listen, I have somewhere on the other side of Lambesc a little unoccupied house of which I will give you the key. Go and hide yourselves there, but don't tell me you're going to do so. If you do, I'll send the gendarmes after you."

It was thus the lovers remained nearly a week at Lambesc. They lived in retirement, amid a peacefulness broken at times by sudden alarms. Philippe had received the thousand francs Marius had sent him. Blanche was becoming quite a little housekeeper, and they ate out of the same plate with delight. This new life was like a dream to the young girl. At times, however, she would wonder why she had gone off with Philippe; she would then experience a revulsion of feeling, and wish to return to her uncle; but she never dared say so.

It was then the time of the feast of Corpus Christi. One afternoon, as Blanche was looking out of the window, she saw a procession pass by. She knelt down and joined her hands, and fancied she could see herself dressed in white among the singers. Her heart was bursting. That night, Philippe received an anonymous letter warning him that he would be arrested on the morrow. He thought he recognised M. de Girousse's handwriting. The flight was resumed, more difficult and painful.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HUNT AFTER THE LOVERS.

THEN ensued a regular rout, a race without truce or repose, an ever-recurring panic. Driven right and left by their fright, perpetually fancying they could hear the sound of horses' hoofs behind them, passing their nights hurrying along the highways and their days trembling in the filthy rooms of country inns, the fugitives crossed and recrossed the whole of Provence, going before them and retracing their footsteps, not knowing where to find an unknown retreat hidden on the confines of some desert.

They left Lambesc one terribly stormy night, and went in the direction of Avignon. They had hired a little cart, and the wind nearly blinded their horse. Blanche was shivering in her thin cotton dress. To complete their wretchedness, they thought they could see from a distance, at one of the gates of the town, some gendarmes examining the faces of the passers-by. Thoroughly frightened, they retraced their steps, and returned to Lambesc through which they only passed.

Arrived at Aix, they did not dare stay there, and resolved to reach the frontier at no matter what cost.

There they would procure themselves a passport, and be in safety. Philippe, who knew a chemist at Toulon, decided to pay a visit to that town. He expected that his friend would be able to assist him in his flight. The chemist, a big, merry fellow named Jourdan, received them very well. He hid them in his own room and promised to at once try and obtain them a passport.

Jourdan was gone out, when two gendarmes called. Blanche nearly fainted away. White as a ghost and seated in a corner, she was stifling her sobs. Philippe, in a choking voice, asked the gendarmes what they wanted.

"Are you M. Jourdan?" one of them inquired, with a roughness which forbode nothing good.

"No," replied the young man. "M. Jourdan is out, but will soon be back."

"Very well," said the gendarme curtly; and he seated himself heavily.

The poor lovers scarcely dared look at each other; they felt fit to faint away in the presence of these men who had, no doubt, come after them. Their anguish lasted a good half hour. At length, Jourdan returned. He paled at the sight of the gendarmes, and answered their questions with the greatest confusion.

"You must come with us," said one of the men.

"What for?" he asked. "What am I accused of?"

"You are charged with having cheated at cards last night in a club. You will be able to give your explanations when before the magistrate."

A shudder passed through Jourdan's frame. He was quite dazed, and accompanied the gendarmes with the docility of a child. They went off without even perceiving the terror of the lovers. Jourdan's affair made a great sensation at Toulon at the time. But no one knew of the painful drama which had been enacted at the chemist's, the day of his arrest.

This event took all the courage out of Philippe. He understood that he was not strong enough to evade the police who were on his track. Besides, he had now no longer any hope of obtaining a passport, and would therefore be unable to cross the frontier. Moreover, he saw that Blanche's strength was giving way. He therefore determined to return towards Marseilles, and wait, in the neighbourhood of the city, until M. de Cazalis' anger was partly appeased. Like all those who have no longer any ground for hope, he had at times ridiculous visions of pardon and happiness.

Philippe had a relation at Aix named Isnard, who kept a draper's shop. Not knowing where to obtain hospitality, the fugitives returned to Aix, to ask Isnard for the key of one of his cottages. A fatality pursued them: the draper was away, and they were obliged to hide themselves in an old house on the Cours Sextius, belonging to a cousin of M. de Girousse's farmer. This woman would not at first receive them, fearing she might be called to account, later on, for her hospitality; she only yielded before Philippe's promises to procure her son's exemption

from military service. The young man was no doubt in a hopeful frame of mind; he could already see himself a deputy's nephew, and was disposing freely of his uncle's great influence.

That evening, Isnard came to the lovers and handed them the key of a cottage he owned in the Puyricard plain. He had two others, one at Tholonet and the other in the district of the Trois-bons-Dieux. The keys of these were hidden under certain great stones which he described to them. He advised them not to remain two nights running beneath the same roof, and promised to do his best to put the police off their track.

They started off and took the road which passes beside the hospital. Isnard's cottage was situated to the right of Puyricard, between the village and the road leading to Venelles. It was one of those ugly little buildings formed of lime-washed stones without mortar, and enlivened by a roof of red tiles; it contained but one room, little better than a dirty stable; straw refuse littered the ground and great cobwebs hung from the ceiling. They had fortunately brought a rug with them. They gathered the litter into a corner and spread the rug over the heap. This formed their couch amid the acrid exhalations of the dampness surrounding them.

On the morrow, they passed the day in a hole in a dried-up watercourse called the Touloubre. Then, towards evening, they gained the Venelles road, and reached Tholonet by a roundabout way in order to avoid passing through Aix. It was eleven o'clock when they arrived at the draper's cottage situated below the jesuit oratory.

This cottage was rather better. It had two rooms, a kitchen and a parlour, which latter contained a fold-up bedstead; the walls were covered with caricatures cut out of the *Charivari*, and strings of onions hung from the white-washed beams. The lovers could almost fancy themselves in a palace.

In the morning their fright returned; they climbed the hill and remained till night-time in the recesses of the Infernets. In those days, the precipices of Jaumegarde still possessed all their sinister horror; the Zola canal had

not then pierced the mountain, and strollers did not often venture into that dismal abyss of reddish rocks. Blanche and Philippe enjoyed profound peacefulness in the midst of this desert; they rested long beside a clear and murmuring spring, which trickled from a gigantic mass of rock.

At night-fall returned the cruel question of shelter. Blanche could now scarcely walk; her wounded feet bled upon the sharp and pointed stones. Philippe understood he could not take her much farther. He supported her, and they slowly ascended to the level ground overlooking the Infernets. It is an extensive uncultivated plain, vast fields of pebbles, waste land broken up here and there by disused quarries. Nothing looks so strangely wild as this broad landscape with its bare horizon dotted here and there with a dark and stunted vegetation; the rocks, looking like distorted limbs, pierce above the barren earth; the plain, having the appearance of a humpback, seems to have been stricken with death in the midst of the convulsions of a terrible agony.

Philippe hoped to find some hole, some cavern. He had the good luck to discover a shanty, one of those shelters in which sportsmen hide themselves while awaiting the flight of birds of passage. He did not hesitate to force in the door, and seated Blanche upon a little bench he felt beneath his hand. Then he went and gathered a quantity of thyme; the plain is covered with this humble grey plant the strong perfume of which rises from every hill of Provence. He carried the thyme into the shelter, and spread it in the form of a mattress over which he laid the rug. The bed was ready, and the fugitives kissed each other good night upon this miserable couch.

Philippe was unable to sleep, the strong smell of the thyme upon which he was lying affected his brain. He dreamt in spite of his wakefulness, that M. de Cazalis had received him affectionately and that he had been elected deputy in his uncle's stead. Now and again he could hear Blanche's mournful sighs, as she slumbered beside him, agitated and feverish. The young girl had come to consider her flight some nightmare full of bitter pleasures. During the day she was rendered stupid by fatigue; she

smiled sadly and never complained. Her inexperience had caused her to agree to the flight, and her weak character prevented her proposing to return. She belonged body and soul to this man who carried her along; all she wished was to have to walk less, she continued to believe that her uncle would consent to her marriage, when his temper had cooled.

The fugitives left their bed of thyme at sunrise. Their clothes were becoming terribly torn, and their shoes were nearly worn out. In the coolness of the morning, amid the wild perfumes of this solitude, they forgot their wretchedness for a time, and declared laughingly that they were frightfully hungry. So Philippe told Blanche to go back to the hut and hurried off to Tholonet in search of food. It took him a good half-hour.

When he returned he found the young girl in a state of terror: she assured him she had seen some wolves prowling about. The table was laid on a large flat stone, and they were like a couple of gipsy lovers breakfasting in the open air. After breakfast, they made for the centre of the plain, and remained there all day. These were some of their happiest hours.

But when twilight fell, fear again seized them, they dreaded to pass another night amidst all that solitude. The pure warm air of the hills had filled them with gentler thoughts and hopes.

"You are tired, my poor child?" asked Philippe.

"Oh! yes," she replied.

"Listen, we must perform one more journey. Let us go as far as Isnard's cottage in the Trois-bons-Dieux district, and remain there until your uncle forgives us or has me arrested."

"My uncle will forgive us."

"I dare not think it. In any case I will no longer fly, you have need of rest. Come, let us walk slowly."

They crossed the plain, leaving the Infernets behind them, and passing the Château of Saint Marc, which they could see on an eminence on their right. They reached their destination at the end of an hour.

Isnard's cottage was on the slope of the hill which

stretches to the left of the Vauvenargues road after one has passed the Repentance glen. It was a small, one-storied house; the ground floor consisted of a single room, containing a rickety table and three old rush-bottomed chairs. A ladder led to the upper room, a kind of loft almost entirely bare, and containing merely a wretched mattress on a heap of hay. Isnard had considerably placed a sheet at the foot of the mattress.

Philippe's intention was to go on the morrow to Aix, and procure information as to M. de Cazalis' intentions towards him. He felt that he would be unable to hide himself any longer. He went to rest in an almost peaceful frame of mind, calmed by Blanche's kind words as she judged events with all a young girl's hopefulness.

It was now twenty days that the fugitives had been running about the country, and during this time the gendarmes had been scouring the neighbourhood, following on their track, sometimes losing it, but always getting set right again by some slight circumstance.

The deputy's anger had only increased with the delay; his pride was irritated by each fresh obstacle. At Lambesc, the gendarmes came a few hours too late; the arrival of the fugitives at Toulon was not known until the morrow of their return to Aix; everywhere they escaped as though by a miracle.

The deputy ended by accusing the police of being lukewarm. He was informed at last that the lovers were in the neighbourhood of Aix, and that they were on the point of being arrested. He hastened there to assist in the search.

The woman of the Cours Sextius, who had given them hospitality for a few hours, was seized with terror. To avoid being accused of complicity, she told all she knew, and said that they were probably hidden in one of Isnard's cottages. Isnard, who was questioned, quietly denied everything. He declared that he had not seen his relative for several months past. This was happening at the very time Philippe and Blanche were entering the cottage in the Trois-bons-Dieux district. The draper was unable to warn the lovers during the night.

At five o'clock the next morning a police commissary called on him and informed him that he was going to search his house and three cottages.

M. de Cazalis remained at Aix, saying he was afraid he would kill his niece's abductor, if he ever met him face to face. The officers sent to search the cottage at Puyricard found the nest empty. Isnard obligingly offered to lead two gendarmes to his place at Tholonet, feeling certain that they would waste their time. The police commissary, also accompanied by two gendarmes, went to the Trois-bons-Dieux. He took a locksmith with him, Isnard having vaguely stated that the key of the cottage was hidden under a stone on the right of the door.

It was about six o'clock when the commissary arrived there. Everything was closed, and not a sound came from inside. He went forward and, hammering on the door with his fist, exclaimed in a loud voice:

"Open in the name of the law!"

Echo alone answered. Nothing stirred. After waiting a few minutes, the commissary turned towards the locksmith, saying:

"Pick the lock."

The locksmith selected his tools, and the grating of the iron could soon be heard in the silence. The shutter of a window was then violently thrown back, and Philippe Cayol, disdainful and angry, his neck and arms bare, appeared in the bright light of the rising sun.

"What do you want?" he asked, leaning on the window-sill.

The first blow struck by the commissary had awoken the fugitives. Seated on the edge of the mattress, still half asleep, they listened anxiously to the voices without.

The words "In the name of the law!" that cry which rings so terribly in the ears of the guilty, struck the young man full in the chest. He jumped up, quivering, bewildered, not knowing what to do. The young girl, huddled up in the sheet, her eyes still heavy with sleep, was shedding tears of shame and despair.

Philippe understood that all was over, and that he had

only to surrender himself. But a dull feeling of revolt rose within him. So his dreams were dead, he would never be Blanche's husband, he had carried off an heiress to be himself cast into gaol: instead of the happy existence he had dreamed of, he ended by gaining a prison cell. Then a cowardly thought passed through his mind: it occurred to him to leave the girl there and fly in the direction of Vauvenargues, in the defiles of Sainte-Victoire; perhaps he could escape by a window at the back of the cottage. He bent over Blanche, and in a low, hesitating voice told her of his project. The young girl, half stifled by her sobs, did not understand nor even hear him. He saw, with anguish, that she was not in a state to assist his flight.

At this moment he heard the sound of the workman picking the lock. The poignant drama that had just been enacted in that bare room had lasted at most a minute. He felt himself lost, and his chafed pride restored his courage. Had he been armed he would have defended himself. But conscious that he was no abductor, Blanche having accompanied him voluntarily, he felt that he had nothing to be ashamed of. So he angrily pushed back the shutter and asked what was wanted.

"Open the door," ordered the police commissary. "We will tell you afterwards what we want."

Philippe went down and opened the door.

"Are you M. Philippe Cayol?" resumed the commissary.

"Yes," replied the young man energetically.

"Then I arrest you on the charge of abduction. You have carried off a young girl under sixteen years of age, who is no doubt hidden here with you."

Philippe smiled, and said: "Mademoiselle Blanche de Cazalis is upstairs, and can tell you if I used any violence towards her. I don't know what you mean by talking of abduction. I was about to go this very day to M. de Cazalis and ask him for his niece's hand in marriage."

Blanche, pale and shivering, had just come down the ladder. She had dressed herself hastily.

"Mademoiselle," said the commissary, "I have orders to take you to your uncle, who is awaiting you at Aix. He is in great grief."

"I am deeply sorry for having displeased my uncle," replied Blanche with some firmness. "But you must not accuse M. Cayol, whom I accompanied of my own free will."

And deeply affected, on the point of again bursting into sobs, she turned towards the young man and continued:

"Have hope, Philippe. I love you and will beseech my uncle to be good to us. Our separation will only last a few days."

Philippe looked at her sadly and shook his head.

"You are a weak and timid child," he replied slowly. Then he added in a harsher tone: "Remember, only, that you belong to me. If you forsake me you will find me ever in your life, the recollection of my kisses will never cease scorching your lips, and that will be your punishment."

She was weeping.

"Love me well, as I love you," he resumed more gently.

The police commissary placed Blanche in a carriage he had had brought to the spot, and took her back to Aix, whilst the two gendarmes marched Philippe off and placed him in the prison of the town.

CHAPTER VII.

BLANCHE DENIES HER LOVE.

THE news of the arrest did not reach Marseilles until the following day, and caused quite a sensation. M. de Cazalis was observed driving along the Cannebière in the afternoon, accompanied by his niece.

The gossips had their fill; every one spoke of the deputy's triumphant attitude, and of Blanche's shame and embarrassment. M. de Cazalis was capable of dragging his niece throughout Marseilles, to show the people she had returned to his protection, and that no woman of his race would marry beneath her.

Marius, informed by Fine, was out and about all day. The common talk of the town confirmed the tidings, and

he was able to pick up all the details of the arrest. In a few hours the event had become legendary, and the shopkeepers, the idlers and loafers related it as though it had been the marvellous tale of something that had happened a century before. The young man, tired of hearing these cock-and-bull stories, went to his office, his head aching and his brain incapable of deciding what course to pursue.

Unfortunately, M. Martelly would be away until the following evening, and Marius felt the need of doing something at once. He would have liked to have immediately taken some steps that would have reassured him as to his brother's fate. His first alarm had now, however, partly subsided. He reflected that after all his brother could not be accused of abduction, and that Blanche would be there to defend him. He ended by naïvely imagining that it was his duty to call upon M. de Cazalis and ask him for his niece's hand in Philippe's name. On the following morning he dressed himself in black, and was going out when Fine came as usual. The poor girl turned quite pale when Marius told her what he was about to do.

"Will you permit me to accompany you?" she asked, in a beseeching tone of voice. "I will wait outside to learn the answer of the young lady and her uncle."

She followed Marius, and when they arrived at the Cours Bonaparte, the young man walked firmly to the deputy's house and sent up his name.

M. de Cazalis' blind passion had now subsided. He held his vengeance. He would be able to prove his might by crushing one of those republicans, whom he detested. Now, his sole desire was to taste the joy of playing with his prey. So he ordered that M. Marius Cayol should be admitted. He expected tears, earnest supplications. The young man found him standing up haughtily in the centre of a vast saloon. He advanced towards him, and, without giving him time to speak, said, calmly and politely:

"I have the honour to ask you, sir, in the name of my brother, M. Philippe Cayol, for the hand of your niece, Mademoiselle Blanche de Cazalis."

The deputy was thunderstruck. Marius' request seemed to him so absurdly extravagant that it failed to anger him. He stepped back, looking the young man straight in the face, and answered with a disdainful laugh:

"You must be mad, sir. I know that you are an industrious and honest fellow, and it is for that reason that I do not have you put out. Your brother is a scoundrel, a knave, who shall be punished as he deserves. What do you want with me?"

On hearing his brother insulted, Marius felt a great desire to strike the noble personage, as one of the rabble would have done. He restrained himself, however, and continued, in a voice that was beginning to tremble with emotion:

"I have already told you, sir. I am here to offer *Mademoiselle de Cazalis* the only reparation possible, that is to say, marriage. The wrong that has been done her can thus be effaced."

"We are above any wrong," exclaimed the deputy, with contempt. "The shame for a *Cazalis* is not that she has had anything to do with a *Philippe Cayol*. Her shame would be to ally herself to such people as you."

"Such people as we, have other ideas as regards honour. However, I will not dwell upon it; my duty alone prompted me to offer you the reparation you refuse. Permit me merely to add, that your niece would no doubt accept this offer if I had the honour of making it to her in person."

"You think so?" said *M. de Cazalis* sarcastically.

He rang the bell and requested the servant to ask his niece to come to him at once. *Blanche* entered, pale-faced and red-eyed, looking worn-out by her too powerful emotions. She shuddered on beholding *Marius*.

"*Mademoiselle*," said her uncle coldly, "this gentleman has asked for your hand on behalf of the scoundrel whose name I will not pronounce in your presence. Tell the gentleman what you told me yesterday."

Blanche reeled. She dared not look at *Marius*. Her eyes fixed upon her uncle, her whole frame trembling, she murmured in a weak and hesitating voice:

"I told you I had been carried off by force, and

that I would do all in my power to secure the punishment of the odious attempt made upon me."

These words were uttered like a lesson learnt beforehand. Blanche denied her love. M. de Cazalis had not lost his time. As soon as his niece was in his power, he influenced her with all the weight of his obstinacy and pride. She alone could secure his ultimate success. It was necessary that she should lie and stifle her feelings, that she should become a compliant and passive instrument in his hands.

During four hours he kept her under the spell of his sharp, cold words. He was not so foolish as to give vent to his rage. He spoke with crushing haughtiness, recalling the ancient origin of his race, displaying his wealth and power. He skilfully showed her on the one hand the picture of a vulgar and ridiculous marriage, and on the other the noble joys of a rich and great alliance. He attacked the young girl through her vanity, tired her out, broke her spirit, dulled her intellect, and rendered her such as he desired, tractable and inert.

Blanche emerged from this long interview, this continuous martyrdom, utterly vanquished. Perhaps, beneath the sting of her uncle's overpowering words, her patrician blood had at length revolted at the memory of Philippe's vulgar love; perhaps her childhood's dreams were called up as the deputy descanted on luxurious costumes, worldly elegance, and honours of all kinds. Moreover, her head was too bad, her heart too sore for her to resist that terrible will. Every sentence M. de Cazalis uttered struck her, crushed her, filled her with painful anxiety. She no longer felt the power of having a will of her own. She had loved and accompanied Philippe through weakness; now she was turning against him also through weakness: she was ever the same timid being. She accepted everything and promised everything. She longed to escape from the stifling weight with which her uncle's words were crushing her.

On hearing her make her strange declaration, Marius stood amazed and terrified. He remembered the young girl's attitude when at Ayasse the gardener's, he could

recall her clinging to Philippe's neck, loving and confiding.

"Ah! mademoiselle," he exclaimed bitterly, "the odious attempt you speak of did not seem to fill you with such abhorrence the day you beseeched me to implore your uncle's pardon and consent! Have you reflected that your falsehood will cause the ruin of the man you perhaps still love, and who should be your husband?"

Blanche, now erect, her lips tightly drawn together, was looking vaguely in front of her.

"I do not know what you mean," she stammered. "I have told no falsehood. I yielded to force. That man took advantage of me, and my uncle will avenge the honour of our family."

Marius drew himself up. Dignified anger increased his short stature, and his feeling of justice and truth made his thin face appear handsome. He looked around him contemptuously, and said, slowly:

"And yet I am in the home of the Cazalis, of the descendants of that illustrious family which is the glory of Provence. I had no idea that falsehood dwelt in this abode, I never expected to find calumny and cowardice lodging here side by side. Oh! you shall hear me to the end. I intend to cast my lackey's dignity in the teeth of my unworthy superiors."

Turning towards the deputy, he continued, as he pointed to the trembling girl:

"That child is innocent, and I forgive her weakness. But you, sir, you are a clever man, you safeguard the honour of your women by making them untruthful and fainthearted. Were you now to offer me the hand of Mademoiselle Blanche de Cazalis for my brother, I should refuse it, for I have never lied, I have never been guilty of a base action, and I should blush to be allied to such people as you."

M. de Cazalis bent beneath the young man's rage. At the first insult he had summoned a big valet, who stood at the open door. As he signed to him to put Marius into the street, the latter resumed, with terrible energy:

"I swear I will shout out 'murder' if this man moves a foot. Let me pass. One day, sir, I may be able to

fling in your face, before all the world, the truths I have just told you in this room."

And he walked out slowly and firmly. He no longer thought of Philippe's guilt, his brother had become in his eyes a victim whom he was determined to save and avenge at no matter what cost. In this upright nature, the slightest untruth or injustice raised a tempest. Already, the scandal stirred up by M. de Cazalis at the time of the elopement, had caused him to take the fugitives' part; now that Blanche lied and the deputy resorted to calumny, he longed to be all-powerful, in order to proclaim the truth from the house-tops.

Fine, a prey to anxiety, was waiting for him outside.

"Well?" asked the young woman, as soon as she caught sight of him.

"Well!" he replied, "those people are miserable liars and vain fools."

Fine drew a deep breath, whilst a blush spread over her cheeks.

"So," she resumed, "M. Philippe is not to marry the young lady?"

"The young lady," said Marius, smiling bitterly, "pretends that Philippe is a scoundrel who carried her off by force. My brother is lost."

Fine did not understand. She bowed her head, wondering how the young lady could treat her lover as a scoundrel. And she thought how happy she would have been had Philippe carried her off, even by force. Marius' anger delighted her: the marriage would never take place.

"Your brother is lost," she murmured in a soft, wheedling voice, "Oh! I will save him, or, rather, we will save him together!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IRON POT AGAINST THE EARTHEN EWER.

WHEN Marius told M. Martelly, that evening, of the interview he had had with M. de Cazalis, the ship-owner said, as he shook his head:

"I do not know what advice to give you, my friend. I do not wish to drive you to despair; but you will be conquered, take my word for it. Your duty is to enter upon the struggle, and I will assist you to the best of my ability. Yet we had better admit to each other that we are weak and unarmed in the presence of an adversary who has the clergy and nobility behind him. Marseilles and Aix have little love for the July monarchy, and these two towns are both wholly devoted to a deputy of the opposition which is waging such a war against M. Thiers. They will assist M. de Cazalis in his revenge; I am alluding to the big-wigs, the common people would help us if they were able to help anyone. The best thing would be to win over some influential member of the clergy to our cause. Do you know any priest who is in favour with our bishop?"

Marius replied that he only knew Abbé Chastanier, a poor old man who certainly possessed no influence.

"Never mind, go and see him," said the shipowner. "The townspeople cannot be of any use to us, the nobility would show us the door if we asked their assistance, so there is only the Church left. That is where we must apply. Begin your campaign, I shall be busy on my side also."

On the following morning Marius went to Saint-Victor, where Abbé Chastanier received him with a sort of timid embarrassment.

"Don't ask me to do anything," he exclaimed, at the first words the young man uttered. "It is known that I have already occupied myself with this affair, and I have had to endure some grave reproaches. I told you before, I am only a poor man, I can only pray for you."

Marius was affected by the old man's humble attitude, and was about to withdraw, when the priest detained him and said in a low voice:

"Listen, there is a man here, Abbé Donadéi, who might be useful to you. It is said that he is on the best of terms with his lordship. He is a foreign priest, an Italian, I think, who has won everybody's goodwill in a few months."

He stopped speaking, hesitating, and seeming to be inquiring of himself. The worthy man was thinking that he was about to compromise himself terribly, but he could not resist the joy of doing a kindness.

"Would you like me to take you to him?" he asked, suddenly.

Marius, who had perceived his slight hesitation, sought to decline; but the old man insisted, forgetting entirely his personal tranquillity, listening only to the promptings of his heart.

"Come," he resumed, "Abbé Donadéi lives only a short distance off, on the Boulevard de la Corderie."

After a few minutes' walk, Abbé Chastanier stopped at a little one-storeyed house, one of those close discreet dwellings which have a vague air of the confessional about them.

"Here we are," said he to Marius.

An old woman-servant opened the door, and conducted them to a small apartment with dark hangings, resembling some austere boudoir.

Abbé Donadéi received them with easy grace. His pale face, with delicate features, bore a slightly cunning expression, and did not show the least surprise. He drew some chairs forward in a coaxing manner, his body half bent, a slight smile about his lips, doing the honours of his study like a lady does those of her drawing-room.

He wore a long black robe, loose at the waist. But this severe costume covered coquettish manners; his delicate white hands appeared quite small as they issued from the ample sleeves, and his clean-shaven face had a soft fresh complexion beneath the curly locks of his chestnut-coloured hair. He looked about thirty years of age.

When he had seated himself in an arm-chair, he listened with smiling gravity to what Marius had to say. He made him repeat all the spicier details of Blanche's elopement, and the story seemed to interest him immensely.

Abbé Donadéi was born at Rome, and had an uncle who was cardinal. One fine day, his uncle suddenly packed him off to France, without anybody knowing exactly why. On his arrival, the handsome abbé found

himself obliged to enter the Aix seminary as teacher of living languages. Such an humble position so humiliated him that he fell ill. The cardinal relented, and recommended his nephew to the bishop of Marseilles. His ambition satisfied, Donadéi quickly recovered. He joined the clergy of Saint Victor, and, as Abbé Chastanier had naïvely said, he succeeded in winning everybody's goodwill in a few months. His caressing Italian nature, his soft pink face, turned him into a cherub in the eyes of the demure lady devotees of the parish. He was especially successful in the pulpit: his slight foreign accent gave a strange charm to his sermons; and, when he spread out his arms, he knew how to cause his hands to tremble with an emotion which filled the eyes of his congregation with tears.

Like most Italians, he was a born intriguer. He used and abused his uncle's recommendation to the bishop of Marseilles, and soon became a power, an occult power working underground, and digging pitfalls in front of those persons he desired to remove from his path. Joining a religious club, then all-powerful at Marseilles, he succeeded in imposing his will on his colleagues, thanks to his suppleness, his perpetual smile and humility, and in becoming the leader of a party. Then he interested himself in every event, had a finger in every pie. It was he who secured M. de Cazalis' election as deputy, and he was awaiting a fitting opportunity to claim the reward of his services. His plan was to work for the success of wealthy people; later on, when he had merited their gratitude, he intended to make use of them in building up his own fortune.

He questioned Marius courteously; by the attention he paid him and his sympathetic manner, he seemed fully disposed to assist him in his work of deliverance. The young man allowed himself to be taken in by this pleasant, amiable behaviour, and unburdened himself, relating his plans, and owning that the clergy alone could save his brother. Finally, he begged his kind offices with his lordship the bishop.

Abbé Donadéi rose, and said in a tone of austere raillery :

"My cloth, sir, forbids my mixing myself up in this deplorable and scandalous affair. The enemies of the Church are only too fond of accusing the clergy of interfering in worldly affairs. I can only beseech the Almighty to pardon your brother."

Marius, in dismay, had also risen. He understood that he had just been duped by Donadéi. He sought, however, to disguise his feelings.

"I thank you," he replied. "Prayers are indeed the sweetest of alms for the unfortunate. Pray that we may be granted the justice of our fellow men."

He turned towards the door, followed by Abbé Chastanier with bowed head. Donadéi had affected to ignore the old priest. When they were on the point of leaving the room, the handsome abbé, recovering all his graceful sprightliness, detained Marius a moment.

"You are employed at M. Martelly's, I think?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the young man answered, with surprise.

"He is a very honourable man. I know, however, that he is not one of our friends. Nevertheless, I esteem him greatly. His sister, Mademoiselle Claire, whose spiritual director I have the honour of being, is one of our best parishioners."

And as Marius looked at him, finding nothing to say, Donadéi added, with a slight blush:

"She is a charming person, most exemplarily pious."

He bowed with exquisite politeness and then gently closed the door. Outside on the pavement, Abbé Chastanier and Marius looked at each other, and the young man could not help shrugging his shoulders. The old priest was quite confused at having seen one of God's ministers play a part like an actor. He turned to his companion, and said, hesitatingly:

"My friend, you must not blame the Almighty if His ministers are not always what they should be. The young man we have just been with is only guilty of ambition——"

He continued a long time in this strain, finding excuses for Donadéi.

Marius watched him, affected by his goodness; and, in

spite of himself, he compared this poor old man to the powerful abbé, whose smiles were law in the diocese. Then he reflected that the Church did not love all her sons equally, but like most mothers spoilt the rosy-cheeked ones and neglected the tender spirits who did good by stealth.

The two visitors were moving off when a carriage drew up at the door of the close, discreet little house, and Marius beheld M. de Cazalis alight. The deputy hastily entered Abbé Donadéi's abode.

"Look, father!" exclaimed the young man. "I feel certain that priest's cloth will not prevent his abetting M. de Cazalis in his vengeance."

He was tempted to return to that home of hypocrisy; but, calming himself, he thanked Abbé Chastanier, and went off. He thought, with despair, that the last loophole of safety, the one in possession of the upper clergy, was closing before him.

On the morrow, M. Martelly told him the result of a visit he had paid to the chief notary of Marseilles, M. Douglas, a pious man who in less than eight years had become quite a power through his wealthy clients and his great charity. His name was loved and respected. People spoke admiringly of the virtues of this upright worker who led a frugal life; unlimited confidence was placed in his honesty, and the activity of his intelligence.

M. Martelly had availed himself of his services when investing some money. He thought that, if Douglas would use his influence on Marius' behalf, the latter would secure some of the clergy to his side. He called on the notary and asked for his assistance.

Douglas, who appeared very much occupied, muttered an evasive reply, saying that he was overwhelmed with business and quite unable to struggle against M. de Cazalis.

"I did not persist," said M. Martelly to Marius, "I thought I understood that your adversary had been beforehand with you there. Yet I am surprised that such an upright man as M. Douglas should have allowed his hands to be tied. I am afraid, now, my poor friend, that the game is indeed up."

For a whole month, Marius went about Marseilles seeking to win over a few influential persons. He was everywhere received coldly, with railing politeness. M. Martelly was not more fortunate. The deputy had enlisted the sympathies of the whole nobility and clergy. The middle-classes, the shopkeepers, were laughing in their sleeves, unwilling to move owing to their great fear of compromising themselves. As for the common people, they sang songs about M. de Cazalis and his niece, this being all they could do on Philippe Cayol's behalf.

Days passed by, and the preparations for the trial went on apace. Marius was still as much alone as on the first day, in preparing his brother's defence against the uncle's hatred and the niece's obedient falsehoods. There was only Fine, whose angry speeches merely won over the workgirls' warm sympathy to Philippe's cause.

One morning Marius learnt that the act of accusation against his brother and the gardener Ayasse had been drawn up, the former being accused of abduction and the latter with being an accomplice in the crime. Madame Cayol had been released for want of proof.

Marius hurried off to embrace his mother. The poor woman had suffered greatly during her incarceration; her feeble health was seriously compromised. A few days after leaving the prison, she gently expired in her son's arms, and he sobbing, vowed to avenge her death.

The funeral was the occasion for a popular demonstration. Philippe's mother was conveyed to the Saint Charles cemetery followed by a long procession of women of the people who did not hesitate to revile M. de Cazalis openly. They were even strongly inclined, after the funeral, to go and throw stones at the windows of the deputy's house.

Alone in his little lodging in the Rue Sainte, Marius, when all was over, felt himself deserted in the world, and wept bitterly. His tears relieved him, he saw the road he had to follow traced out clearly before him. The misfortunes which were overwhelming him increased, in his breast, the love of truth and hatred of injustice. He felt that all his life must henceforth be devoted to a

holy cause. He could no longer act at Marseilles, the scene of the drama having changed. Future events would be occurring at Aix, where the trial was to be held. He desired to be on the spot in order to follow the different phases of the affair, and take advantage of any incidents which might arise. He asked his employer for a month's leave of absence, which the latter immediately granted. The day of his departure, he found Fine waiting at the coach-office.

"I am going to Aix with you," she said quietly.

"But that would be madness!" he exclaimed. "You cannot afford to give your time thus. Who will attend to your flowers during your absence?"

"Oh! one of my friends, a girl who lives on the same floor as I do at the house on the Place aux Œufs. I said to myself: 'I can be useful to them;' so I put on my best dress, and here I am."

"I thank you very much," Marius replied simply, in an agitated voice.

CHAPTER IX.

M. DE GIROUSSE LETS HIS TONGUE WAG.

ON arriving at Aix, Marius went to Isnard's, in the Rue d'Italie. The draper had not been molested. No doubt, such an insignificant prey was not considered worth capturing.

Fine went straight to the gaoler of the prison, whose niece she was by marriage. She had her plan, and brought with her an enormous bunch of roses which was well received. Her pretty smiles, her caressing liveliness made her in a couple of hours her uncle's spoilt child. He was a widower with two young daughters to whom Fine at once played the part of mother.

The trial was not to take place till early in the following week.

Marius, his hands tied, no longer daring to attempt anything, awaited the proceedings with anguish. At

times, he was still mad enough to hope, and to believe in an acquittal. Walking one evening on the Cours, he met M. de Girousse, who had come from Lambesc to be present at the affair. The old nobleman took his arm, and, without saying a word, led him to his house.

"There," said he, after closing the door of a large drawing-room, "now we are alone, my friend. I can come down from my pedestal as much as I please."

Marius smiled at the count's rough and eccentric ways.

"Well," the latter went on, "you don't ask me to help you, to defend you against Cazalis? Come, you're sensible. You understand that I can do nothing against that vain and obstinate nobility to which I belong. Ah! your brother has done a fine thing!"

M. de Girousse was striding about the drawing-room. He pulled himself up abruptly before Marius, and said to him in a loud voice:

"Listen well to what I am about to tell you. There are some fifty of us in this good town, all old fellows like myself, living by ourselves, buried in a past for ever dead. We profess to be the cream of the cream of Provence, and there we stick, doing nothing but twirling our thumbs. For, see you! we are noblemen, chivalrous hearts, awaiting devoutly the return of their legitimate princes. And, the deuce take it! we shall wait a long time, so long that we shall all have died of solitude and idleness, before the least legitimate prince shows himself. If we were gifted with good eyes we should observe the march of events. We cry out to facts: 'You shall go no farther!' and yet the facts pass quietly over our bodies and crush us.

"It maddens me to see how we are shut up in an obstinacy as ridiculous as it is heroic. To think that we are most of us wealthy, that we might nearly all become intelligent manufacturers, working for the prosperity of the country, and that we prefer to grow mouldy in the recesses of our mansions, like the rubbish of a bygone age!"

He stopped to take breath, and then went on still more energetically:

"And we take a pride in our empty existence. We don't work because we disdain labour. We have a holy

horror of the people because their hands are soiled. Ah! your brother dared to touch one of our daughters! We'll show him whether his blood is the same as ours. We shall league ourselves together and give the rascallions a lesson, we'll cure them of seeking to find favour in our children's eyes. Some powerful ecclesiastics will second us; they are fatally bound to our cause. It will be a splendid campaign for our vanity."

After a pause, M. de Girousse resumed sarcastically:

"Our vanity—it has at times received some nasty knocks. A few years prior to my birth, a terrible tragedy was enacted in the mansion adjoining this. M. d'Entrecasteaux, the president of the parliament, murdered his wife in her bed; he cut her throat with a razor, which was not found till twenty-five days afterwards at the bottom of the garden. The victim's jewels were discovered down the well, where the murderer had thrown them to lead the authorities to believe that robbery was the reason of the murder. President d'Entrecasteaux took to flight and went, I believe, to Portugal, where he died in poverty. The parliament condemned him, in default, to be broken alive on the wheel.

"So you see we have also our scoundrels, and that the lower classes have nothing to envy us. That cowardly crime, committed by one of ourselves, dealt a sad blow in those days to our authority. A novelist might write a heart-rending book with the materials furnished by this doleful and tragic story."

Resuming his walk, M. de Girousse continued:

"And we also know how to humble ourselves. For instance, when Fouché, the regicide, then Duke of Otranto, was, somewhere about 1810, exiled for a short time to our town, all the nobles dragged themselves before him.

"I remember an anecdote which will show you to what abject servility we lowered ourselves. On New Year's Day 1811, there was a long file of persons waiting to pay their respects to the ex-member of the Convention. In the reception-room there was some talk of the severity of the weather, and one of the callers was expressing his fears as to the fate of the olive-trees. 'What do we care

for the olive-trees!' exclaimed one of the noble personages, 'providing his Grace the Duke keeps well!'

"That's how we are nowadays, my friend, humble with the mighty, haughty with the weak. There are no doubt some exceptions, but they are rare. You must see, therefore, that your brother will be convicted. Our pride, which bent the knee before a Fouché, cannot do so before a Cayol. That's logical. Good-night!"

And the count abruptly dismissed Marius. His own words had exasperated him, and he feared that his anger might end by making him say something foolish.

The next day, the young man met him again and M. de Girousse took him home as on the previous evening. He held in his hand a newspaper containing a list of the jury who were to decide Philippe's case and struck the paper forcibly with his finger, exclaiming:

"Those are the men who will condemn your brother! Shall I tell you some stories about them? They are curious and instructive."

M. de Girousse seated himself, and glanced through the paper, shrugging his shoulders as he did so.

"It's a packed jury," he said at last, "an assembly of rich men who have every interest to serve the cause of M. de Cazalis. They are all more or less mixed up with the clergy or on intimate terms with the nobility. They are almost all friends of men who spend their mornings in the churches and cheat their customers the rest of the day."

Then he named them one by one, and spoke of the set they frequented with increasing indignation.

"Humbert," he said, "is the brother of a Marseilles' merchant, a dealer in oil, an honest man who holds his head erect and whom every poor devil salutes. Twenty years ago their father was but a struggling clerk. To-day his sons are millionaires, thanks to his skillful speculations. One year he sold a large quantity of oil beforehand, at the market rate. A few weeks afterwards the cold destroyed the olive-trees, the crop was lost, and he was a ruined man if he did not deceive his customers. But he preferred deceit to poverty.

"Whilst his brother-merchants were delivering the

genuine article at a loss, our man bought up all the spoilt and rancid oils he could find, and then made the promised deliveries. His customers complained and grew angry, but the speculator coolly replied that he was strictly keeping to his agreements and that they could claim nothing further of him. And the trick was played. All Marseilles, which knows the story, is never tired of taking its hat off to this skilful man.

“Gautier is another Marseilles marchand. He has a nephew, Paul Bertrand, who swindled in style. This Bertrand was in partnership with a person named Aubert, living in New York, who used to send him consignments of goods to be disposed of in Marseilles. They shared the profits. Our man made immense sums in this business, the more especially as he was careful to cheat his partner at each division of profits.

“One day, a crisis broke out and losses were incurred. Bertrand continued to receive the goods which the ships still brought, but he refused to honour the drafts Aubert drew upon him, saying that business was bad and he was in difficulties. The returned bills come back again with enormous expenses attached to them. Then Bertrand calmly says that he won't pay, that he is not obliged to be Aubert's partner for ever, and that he owes nothing. There's a fresh return of the bills, fresh expenses incurred, and the New York merchant, surprised and indignant, has to take them up at great loss. The latter, who had to plead through a power of attorney, lost the action for damages he brought against Bertrand; I was assured that two thirds of his fortune, twelve hundred thousand francs, were swallowed up in this catastrophe.

“Bertrand remains the most honest man in the world; he is received everywhere and belongs to several congregations, he is envied and honoured.

“Dutailly is a dealer in corn. Some time ago, one of his sons-in-law, George Fouque, met with a misadventure which caused a scandal that his friends hastened to hush up. Fouque always arranged matters so that it should appear that the cargoes the ships brought him had suffered in transport. The insurance offices paid on the report of

an expert. But tired of continually paying, the offices appointed as expert an honest baker, who soon received a visit from Fouque. The latter, whilst conversing on indifferent matters, slipped a few gold pieces into his hand. The baker dropped the coins and kicked them into the middle of the room. There were several persons present, yet Fouque's reputation has in no way suffered.

"Delorme lives in a town not far from Marseilles. He retired from business long ago. Listen to the disgraceful action his cousin Mille was guilty of. Thirty years back, Mille's mother kept a draper's shop. When the old lady retired, she sold her stock and goodwill to one of her assistants, an active and intelligent young fellow whom she almost looked upon as a son. This person, whose name was Michel, quickly discharged the debt and so increased his business that he felt compelled to take a partner. He chose a young fellow of Marseilles named Jean Martin, who had a little money, and who appeared to be an honest, hard-working man. It was an assured fortune that Michel offered to his partner.

"At first, everything went well. The profits increased annually, and each partner put by a good round sum at the end of the year. But Jean Martin, who was eager for gain and dreamed of a rapid fortune, ended by reflecting that he would make twice as much if he were alone. The matter was a difficult one: Michel was in fact his benefactor, and moreover he had a friend in the landlord of the house, Madame Mille's son. If the latter were honest, Jean Martin would be unable to put his nefarious scheme into execution. He went to see him, and found him to be the scoundrel he required. He proposed to him to give him a new lease, in consideration of a large sum of money; he doubled and even trebled the amount. Mille, who is both a rogne and a miser, sold himself for as much as possible. The bargain was struck. Then Jean Martin played the hypocrite with Michel: he said he desired to cancel the partnership deed and to start a business elsewhere; he even named a place he had taken. Michel, surprised but not suspecting the infamous trick of which he was to be the victim, said he

could retire if he liked, and the deed was cancelled.

“Shortly afterwards Michel’s lease expired, and Jean Martin, armed with the new lease, triumphantly turned his ex-partner out. Michel, nearly driven mad by such a piece of treachery, opened a business elsewhere; but having no customers, he lost the money so painfully amassed during thirty years of labour. He died paralysed, suffering atrociously, shouting that Mille and Martin were scoundrels and traitors, and calling on his sons to avenge him. To-day, his sons are toiling and moiling to keep body and soul together. Mille is connected by marriage with the best families in the town, his children are wealthy, and living handsomely in an odour of piety, and possessing the esteem of all.

“There’s Faivre. His mother was married twice, her second husband being a man named Chabran, a ship-owner and bill discounter. Pretending he had made some unfortunate speculations, Chabran wrote one day to his numerous creditors to the effect that he was obliged to suspend payment. Some of them consented to give him time, but the majority decided to proceed against him. So Chabran engages two young fellows as clerks, and spends a week in coaching them up in the parts he wishes them to play; then, accompanied by these youngsters, now thoroughly trained, he calls on all his creditors, one after the other, bewailing his sad position, and imploring their pity for his two starving sons who haven’t a coat to their backs. The trick succeeds admirably well. All the creditors forego their claims.

“The next day Chabran was at the Bourse, more sedate and more insolent than ever. A broker, who had not heard of the affair, asked him to discount three bills accepted, as it so happened, by three of the very merchants who had treated him so generously the day before. ‘I can have nothing to do with those kind of people,’ he replied, haughtily. At the present time, Chabran has almost retired from business. He lives in a villa where he gives sumptuous dinners on Sundays.

“As for Gerominot, the president of the club where he spends his evenings is a usurer of the very worst description. It is said that he has earned at the trade a snug little

million, which enabled him to marry his daughter to one of the princes of finance. His name is Pertigny. But since his last failure, which left him a capital of three hundred thousand francs sticking to his fingers, he goes by the name of Félix. This skilful rascal failed a first time forty years ago, and that enabled him to purchase a house. His creditors received fifteen per cent. Ten years later, a second failure procured him a little place in the country. That time his creditors received ten per cent. Scarcely fifteen years ago he failed a third time, on that occasion for three hundred thousand francs, and offered a composition of five per cent. The creditors having declined to accept it, he proved to them that all the property was really his wife's, and he never paid them a centime."

Marius, thoroughly sickened, made a movement of disgust, as though to stop these abominable stories.

"You don't believe me, perhaps," said the terrible count. "You're a simpleton, my friend. I've not yet done, and you must hear me to the end."

M. de Girousse railed in a dreadful manner. His loud hissing words fell like the lash of a whip upon the persons whose disreputable histories he was relating. He named the jurymen one after another, he searched their lives and the lives of their relations, and laid bare all the scandals and meannesses connected with them. There was scarcely one he spared. Then he placed himself vehemently before Marius, and continued bitterly:

"Were you so simple as to believe that all these millionaires, all these upstarts, all these powerful persons who domineer over you and crush you to-day, were little saints, worthy individuals, whose lives were spotless? At Marseilles especially, these men display their vanity and insolence; they have become devotees and hypocrites; they have deceived even the worthy people who salute and esteem them. In a word, they form an aristocracy of their own; their past is forgotten; their wealth and newly-acquired probity are alone seen.

"Well! I'll unmask them. Listen: This one made his fortune by betraying his friend; that other, by traf-

ficking in human flesh ; that other, in selling his wife and daughter ; that other, in speculating on the misery of his creditors ; that other, in buying back for a song the shares of a company of which he was manager, and which he had brought into disrepute ; that other, by scuttling a ship loaded with stones instead of merchandise, and securing a handsome sum from the underwriters ; that other, verbally a partner, by refusing to pay his share of the losses in an unfortunate speculation ; that other, by concealing his assets, failing two or three times, and ultimately living like an honest man ; that other, by selling as wine a decoction of logwood or bullock's blood ; that other, by buying up all the corn at a time of scarcity ; that other, by defrauding the customs on a large scale, attempting to corrupt the officers and robbing to his heart's content ; that other, by forging the signatures of friends or relations to bills which they do not dare to dishonour at maturity, but prefer to pay rather than disgrace the forger ; that other, by setting fire to his factory or ships previously insured far above their value ; that other, by tearing up and burning his acceptances snatched from his creditor's hand the day they fell due ; that other, by speculating at the Bourse without any intention of paying his differences, which does not prevent him enriching himself a week afterwards at the expense of some dupe——”

M. de Girusse stopped for want of breath. He remained silent for some time, giving his anger an opportunity of dying out. Then he again opened his lips, and smiled less bitterly.

“I am a bit of a misanthrope,” he said gently, to Marius, who had listened to him with pain and surprise “I see the dark side of everything. The fact is, the idleness to which my title condemns me has enabled me to study the ignominies of this country. But I must tell you there are some honest folk among us. Unfortunately they either dread or disdain the rascals.”

Marius took his leave of M. de Girusse, quite upset by the ardent words he had been listening to. He foresaw that his brother would be unmercifully condemned.

The trial was to begin on the morrow.

CHAPTER X.

A SCANDALOUS TRIAL.

ALL Aix was in a flutter. Scandal acquires additional force in quiet little towns, where the curiosity of the gossips has not frequently some fresh material to feed upon. All the talk was of Philippe and Blanche; the lovers' adventures were related at every street corner; it was openly said that the accused was condemned beforehand, that M. de Cazalis had, either personally or through his friends, secured a promise of conviction from each jurymen.

The Aix clergy gave the deputy its assistance, though in a rather lukewarm manner, it is true. It comprised in those days some men who were unwilling to be parties to an act of injustice. A few priests, however, submitted to the influence of the religious club at Marseilles, of which Abbé Donadéi was, so to say, the leader. These attempted in various ways to tie the hands of the magistracy. They succeeded especially in persuading the jurymen of the righteousness of M. de Cazalis' cause.

The nobles rendered them powerful aid in their task. They considered that their honour demanded they should crush Philippe Cayol. They regarded him as a personal enemy who, having dared to attack the dignity of one of themselves, had by so doing insulted the whole body of them. To see these counts and marquises bestir themselves, give vent to their anger, and band themselves together, one might have fancied that some hostile army was at the gates of the town. Yet it was, after all, simply a question of securing the conviction of a poor wretch guilty of love and ambition.

Philippe, however, had some friends and defenders. All the lower classes declared themselves freely for him. They blamed his conduct and reproved the means he had employed, saying that he would have done better to have loved and married a young woman in his own class of life; but, whilst censuring his behaviour, they loudly took his part against the deputy's pride and hatred.

It was known throughout the town that Blanche, when before the examining magistrate, had denied her love; and the daughters of the people, true Provençal women, enthusiastic and courageous, spoke of her with insulting contempt. They called her "renegade," ascribed the most shameful motives to her conduct, and did not hesitate to cry their opinions from the house-tops in the expressive language of the gutter.

All this clamour compromised Philippe's cause considerably. The whole town was in the secret of the drama about to be performed. Those whose interest it was to secure the prisoner's conviction, being certain of succeeding did not even take the trouble to hide their proceedings; those who would have liked to have saved him, conscious of their weakness and unarmed condition, relieved themselves by bawling, delighted to annoy those powerful persons whom they had no hope of mastering.

M. de Cazalis had shamelessly dragged his niece with him to Aix. During the first days he took a sort of proud delight in walking her up and down the Cours. It was his way of protesting against the idea of dishonour with which the crowd coupled the young girl's flight; he seemed to be proclaiming to the world at large: "You see that a lout cannot damage the honour of a Cazalis. My niece still looks down upon you from the height of her rank and fortune."

But he was unable to continue these walks long. His behaviour angered the mob, who insulted Blanche and was on the point of stoning her and her uncle. The women especially were furious; they did not perceive that it was not the niece's fault and that she was simply submitting to an iron will. She trembled before the popular wrath, and lowered her eyes in order not to see those women gazing at her with such fiery glances. She could feel their contemptuous gesticulations behind her, hear horrible words she failed to understand, and her legs were giving way beneath her as she clung to her uncle's arm in order not to fall. She returned home one day, pale and trembling, and declared she would not go out again. The poor child was going to become a mother.

At last the day of the trial arrived.

The doors of the court-house were besieged from early morning, the Place des Prêcheurs was filled with a noisy gesticulating crowd, clamouring as to the probable result of the trial, and discussing Philippe's guilt and M. de Cazalis' and Blanche's attitude.

The court-room slowly filled. Extra rows of seats had been added for the persons provided with tickets; there were so many of them that the majority had to remain standing. There were the flower of the nobility, the leading barristers, the high functionaries, in fact all the notabilities of Aix. No prisoner had ever before had such an audience.

When the doors were opened for the admission of the general public, only a few persons were able to find room. The remainder were compelled to wait in the passages, and even on the steps of the building. And now and again the crowd indulged in groaning and hooting, and the noise penetrated and swelled in the court-room, and disturbed its quiet majesty.

The ladies had taken possession of the gallery, and there formed a compact mass of smiling and anxious faces. Those in the front row fanned themselves, or leant forward with their gloved hands resting on the red velvet covering the rail of the balustrade. Further back, in the shadow, rose serried tiers of pink faces, their bodies scarcely discernible amid the mass of laces, ribbons, and stuffs. And silvery laughter, whispered words, shrill little cries, fell from this rosy, gossiping crowd. The ladies fancied themselves at a theatre.

When Philippe Cayol was brought in, there ensued a great silence. The ladies devoured him with their eyes; some even examined him from top to toe with their opera-glasses. The big fellow with his energetic features was quite a success. The women, having come to judge of Blanche's taste, no doubt considered the young person less to blame, when they beheld her lover's lofty stature and clear penetrating eyes.

Philippe's attitude was calm and dignified. He was dressed entirely in black, and seemed to ignore the pre-

sence of the two gendarmes beside him, rising up and reseating himself with all the grace of a man of the world. Now and again, he calmly surveyed the crowd, without the least effrontery. He gazed several times up at the gallery; and on each occasion he smiled in spite of himself, so great was his wish to love and please even there.

The indictment was read and was overwhelming for the accused. In the depositions of M. de Cazalis and his niece the incidents were distorted in a skilful and terrible manner. It was stated that Philippe had perverted Blanche's mind by the aid of bad books: the truth being that he had lent her two utterly puerile works by Madame de Genlis. The indictment further said on the strength of Blanche's version of the story, that she had been carried away by force, that she had clung to an almond-tree, and that during the flight the abductor had resorted to violence to oblige his victim to follow him. The gravest allegation was founded on one of Blanche's depositions: she pretended she had never written Philippe any letters and that the two produced by him were antedated ones which he had made her write at Lambesc, by way of precaution.

When the reading of the indictment was finished, the place became filled with the noisy murmur of innumerable private conversations. Each spectator, before coming to the court-house, had his own version, and now was discussing in a low voice the official one. Outside, the mob was howling. The presiding judge threatened to have the hall cleared, and silence was gradually restored.

Philippe's examination was then proceeded with. When the presiding judge had asked the usual preliminary questions and had repeated to him the particulars of the indictment drawn up against him, the young man, without refuting them, exclaimed in a clear voice:

"I am accused of having been carried off by a young girl!"

These words caused a general laugh. The ladies hid themselves behind their fans to give full vent to their feelings. Philippe's words, foolish and absurd as they seemed, contained nevertheless a great deal of truth.

The presiding judge sensibly observed that no one had ever known a man of thirty to be carried off by a girl of sixteen, to which Philippe quietly replied :

“Neither has anyone ever seen a girl of sixteen wandering along the highways, passing through towns, meeting hundreds of people, without appealing to the first person she encountered to deliver her from her abductor, her gaoler.”

And he endeavoured to show the material impossibility of the acts of violence and intimidation of which he was accused. At every hour of the day, Blanche had been free to leave him, to procure aid and succour; if she had accompanied him, it was because she loved him and had consented to the flight. In addition to this, Philippe expressed the greatest affection for the young girl, and the greatest deference for M. de Cazalis. He admitted his errors, and merely asked not to be branded as an infamous abductor.

The trial was adjourned to the morrow for the hearing of the witnesses. That night the town was in an uproar; the ladies spoke of Philippe with affected indignation, serious men referred to him more or less severely, while the lower classes energetically took his part.

On the morrow, the crowd outside the court-house was, if anything, larger and noisier than on the previous day. The witnesses were nearly all for the prosecution. M. de Grousse had not been summoned; his rough frankness was dreaded; and, moreover, he should rather have been arrested as an accomplice. Marius had begged him not to compromise himself in the affair; he also feared the old count's violence, which might spoil everything.

There was scarcely more than the evidence of one witness in Philippe's favour, that of the inn-keeper at Lambesc, who declared that Blanche was accompanying her lover of her own free will.

This evidence was, however, effaced, so to say, by the depositions of the other witnesses. Marguerite, the milk-woman, stammered and said she no longer remembered having brought the accused any letters from Mademoiselle de Cazalis. It was thus that each witness served the

deputy's interest, either through fear, or stupidity and loss of memory.

The pleadings commenced and went into the third day.

Philippe's counsel defended him with dignified simplicity. He did not seek to excuse what was reprehensible in his conduct; he described him as being an ardent, ambitious man led astray by dreams of love and wealth. But at the same time, he showed that the accused could not be convicted of abduction, and that the affair itself negated all idea of violence and intimidation.

The crown attorney's speech was most vindictive. It was expected that it would have been milder, and his energetic accusations produced a disastrous effect.

The jury brought in a verdict of guilty, and Philippe Cayol was condemned to five years' imprisonment and to be exhibited in the pillory on one of the public squares of Marseilles.

The gardener Ayasse was only condemned to a few months' imprisonment.

The sentences were received with murmurs in the courtroom, whilst outside the crowd howled with rage.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW BLANCHE AND FINE FIND THEMSELVES FACE TO FACE.

WHEN sentence was passed on Philippe, Blanche was present, hidden at the back of the gallery.

She was there by order of her uncle, who had wished to completely stamp out her affection, by showing her her lover standing between two gendarmes, like a thief. An elderly lady relative had consented to accompany her to this edifying scene.

As the two ladies were awaiting their carriage on the steps of the court-house, the crowd, pushing forward, suddenly separated them. Blanche, who was dragged to the centre of the Place des Prêcheurs, was recognised by the market-women, who began hooting and insulting her.

"That's her, that's her!" shouted the women, "the Renegade, the Renegade!"

The poor bewildered child, not knowing where to fly to, was half dead with shame and fright, when a young girl energetically divided the howling mob that surrounded her and placed herself at her side.

It was Fine.

The flower-girl had also been to hear sentence passed on Philippe. For the space of nearly three hours she had passed through all the anguish of hope and fear; the crown attorney's speech had been crushing, and on hearing the judgment she had begun to weep.

She had just quitted the court-house, irritated and in a terrible state of excitement, when the hooting of the market-women reached her. She understood that Blanche was there and that she would be able to avenge herself by abusing her; she dashed forward with clenched fists, and an insult ready on her lip. According to her, the young girl was the great culprit: she had lied, she had been guilty of perjury and cowardice. At this thought all Fine's plebeian blood rushed to her face and urged her on to shout and strike.

She rushed forward and separated the crowd to take her share of vengeance.

But, when she was face to face with Blanche, when she saw her doubled in two by fright, she had pity for the weak and trembling child. She found her so small, so captivating, so delicately fragile, that a generous thought of pardon came from her heart. She violently pushed back the women who were shaking their fists at the young lady, and, stretching herself to her full height, exclaimed in a loud voice:

"And what now? Aren't you ashamed? She is alone and you are a hundred against her. The Almighty doesn't require your shouts to punish her. Let us pass."

She had taken Blanche's hand, and stood erect before the murmuring people, who drew closer together so as not to allow the two young girls to get through them. Fine awaited with pale and trembling lips. And, as she encouraged the little lady with a glance, she perceived that

she would soon be a mother. She turned quite pale and advanced towards the women.

"Let me pass," she continued, with greater violence. "Do you not see the poor girl's condition, and that you will kill her child?"

She thrust back an old hag who was protesting, and all the others gave way.

Fine's words had suddenly made them silent and compassionate. Both girls were then able to retire.

Blanche, crimson with shame, nestled in fear against her companion and feverishly hastened her footsteps.

In order to avoid the Rue du Pont Moreau, which was then swarming with people and full of noise, the flower-girl took the little Rue St. John. On reaching the Cours, she conducted Mademoiselle de Cazalis to her residence, the door of which was open. She had not uttered a single word all the way.

Blanche obliged her to enter the hall, and there, half closing the door, she said to her in an affected tone of voice:

"Oh! Mademoiselle, how grateful I am to you for your assistance. Those wicked women would have killed me."

"Don't thank me," answered Fine sharply, "I went there, like the others, to insult and beat you."

"You!"

"Yes, I hate you, I wish you had died in your cradle."

Blanche looked at the flower-girl with astonishment. She had drawn herself up, her aristocratic instincts were getting the better of her, and her lips were curling slightly with disdain.

The two young girls were facing each other, one in all her slim gracefulness, the other in all her energetic beauty. They contemplated each other in silence, feeling the rivalry of their race and heart thundering within them.

"You are beautiful and wealthy," continued Fine bitterly. "Why did you come and rob me of my sweetheart, when later on you could only feel contempt and anger for him? You should have sought out someone in your own sphere; you would have found a youth as pale and

cowardly as yourself who would have satisfied your little girlish feeling of love. Look here, do not take our men, or if you do we will tear your pink faces."

"I do not understand," stammered Blanche, who was becoming afraid again.

"You don't understand? Listen: I was in love with Philippe. He came and bought roses of me of a morning and my heart used to beat fit to break, when I handed him my nose-gays. I now know where those flowers went to. One day they told me he had run away with you. I wept, then I thought that you would love him fondly and he would be happy. And now you have had him put in prison. Look here, do not let us speak of that, or I shall get angry and beat you."

She stopped palpitating, then continued, approaching nearer to Blanche and burning her icy cold cheeks with her hot breath:

"You don't know then how we love, we poor girls? We love with all our body, with all our courage. When we run away with a man, we don't say afterwards that he took advantage of our weakness. We clasp him in our arms with all our might to defend him. Ah! if Philippe had loved me! But I am an unhappy girl, a poor creature, an ugly——"

And Fine began to sob and show herself as weak as Mademoiselle de Cazalis. The latter took her hand, and in a voice broken with tears answered:

"For pity's sake do not accuse me. Will you be my friend? Shall I lay my heart bare to you? I suffer so much, if you only knew! I can do nothing. I obey my uncle, who subdues me in his grip of iron. I am a coward, I know it; but I have not the strength to be otherwise. And I love Philippe, the memory of him is always within me. He told me it would be: that my punishment, if ever I betrayed him, would be to love him eternally, to keep him without end in my breast. He is there, he is burning me, he will kill me. A short time ago, when they sentenced him, I felt something within me that made me start, and which tore my inside. I weep, look, I ask your pardon."

All Fine's anger had gone. She was supporting Blanche, who was staggering.

"You are right," continued the poor child, "I do not deserve pity. I have dealt a blow at the one I love and who will never love me more. Ah! for mercy's sake, if he one day become your husband, speak to him of my tears, ask him to forgive me. What drives me mad is that I cannot tell him I worship him: he would laugh, he would not understand all my cowardice. No, do not speak to him of me. Let him forget me: I shall be alone to weep."

There was a painful silence.

"And your child?" asked Fine.

"My child," said Blanche bewildered, "I don't know. My uncle will take it away from me."

"Shall I act as a mother to it?"

The flower-girl uttered these words in a tender and grave voice. Mademoiselle clasped her in her arms in a passionate embrace.

"Oh! you are good," she said. "You know how to love. Try to see me at Marseilles when the hour arrives, I will trust in you."

At this moment, the elderly relative returned, after having sought in vain for Blanche in the crowd. Fine promptly withdrew and reascended the Cours. As she reached the Place des Carmélites, she perceived Marius from afar conversing with Philippe's lawyer.

The young man was in despair. He would never have believed that they could pass such a severe sentence on his brother. The five years' imprisonment terrified him; but he was perhaps still more painfully overcome at the thought of the public exhibition on a square at Marseilles. He recognised the deputy's hand in this punishment.

M. de Cazalis had above all wished to deprive Philippe of the power of pleasing, to render him for ever unworthy of woman's love.

The crowd surrounding Marius were clamouring about injustice, the public with one voice protesting against the enormity of the punishment, and while the young man was engaged in a heated discussion with the lawyer, losing

his temper and showing symptoms of despair, he felt a soft hand on his arm. He turned sharply round and perceived Fine at his side, calm and smiling.

"Hope, and follow me," she said to him in an undertone. "Your brother is saved."

CHAPTER XII.

WHICH SHOWS THAT A GAOLER'S HEART IS NOT ALWAYS MADE OF STONE.

WHILE Marius was running over the town before the trial to no purpose, Fine had been labouring on her side at the work of deliverance. She had engaged in a regular campaign against the conscience of her uncle, the gaoler Revertégat.

She had taken up her quarters with him, and passed her days at the prison. She did her best from morning to night to make herself useful, to be beloved by her uncle, who lived alone like a growling bear, with his two young daughters. She attacked him in his paternal love, she was full of charming ways with the children, and spent all her savings in toys, sweets, and small articles of dress.

The little ones were not in the habit of being spoiled. They showed riotous tenderness for their big cousin, who danced them on her knees and distributed such nice, beautiful things amongst them. The father felt affected and thanked Fine effusively.

He experienced the young girl's penetrating influence in spite of himself, and was ill-tempered when he had to leave her. She seemed to have brought the sweet perfume of her roses and violets with her. The lodge smelt nice since she was there, merry and light of foot; her bright petticoats appeared to bring light, air, and gaiety. All was smiling, now, in the dark room, and Revertégat remarked, with a broad grin, that spring had taken up its abode with him.

The worthy man forgot himself in the caressing effluvia of this spring; his heart softened and he lost the harshness and severity of his calling.

Fine was too smart a girl not to play her part with fondling prudence. She did not hasten events, she brought the gaoler little by little to feelings of compassion and kindness. Then she pitied Philippe before him, and obliged him to acknowledge that they were detaining him unjustly in prison.

When she held her uncle in her power, off his guard and disposed to be obedient to her wishes, she asked him if she could not visit the poor young man's cell. He dared not say no, but conducted her there, allowed her to enter, and remained watching at the door.

Fine stood before Philippe like a silly thing. She gazed at him, confused and blushing, forgetting what she wanted to say to him. The young man recognised her, and hastened towards her with a movement full of tenderness and delight.

"You here, my dear child?" he exclaimed. "Ah! how kind of you to have come to see me. Will you allow me to kiss your hand?"

Philippe assuredly imagined himself in his little apartment in the Rue Sainte, and he was not perhaps far from dreaming of a fresh adventure. The flower-girl, surprised, almost wounded, withdrew her hand and gravely contemplated Blanche's lover.

"You must be mad, Monsieur Philippe," she answered. "You know very well that you are married now, for me. Let us speak of serious things."

She lowered her voice and continued rapidly:

"The gaoler is my uncle, and I have been working at your deliverance for the past week. I wanted to see you to tell you that your friends have not forgotten you. So hope."

Philippe, on hearing this good news, regretted his amorous welcome.

"Give me your hand," he said, in an unsteady voice, "It is a friend who asks you for it, to clasp it as an old comrade. Do you forgive me?"

The flower-girl smiled without answering.

"I think," she resumed, "that I shall soon be able to throw the gate wide open to you. On what day would you like to run away?"

"Run away! But I shall be acquitted. What is the use of running away? If I were to escape I should be acknowledging my guilt."

Fine had not thought of this reasoning. To her mind Philippe was condemned beforehand; but, as a matter of fact, he was right, he must await the judgment. As she preserved silence, pensive and irresolute, Revertégat gave two gentle knocks at the door to beg her to leave the cell.

"Well!" she resumed, addressing the prisoner, "be ready all the same. If you are condemned, we will prepare your flight, your brother and me. Have faith."

She withdrew, leaving Philippe almost in love. She had now time before her to win over her uncle. She continued the same tactics, bewitching the worthy man with her goodness of heart and gracefulness, and exciting his pity on his prisoner's lot. In the end she even drew her two little cousins into the conspiracy, and they at a word would have left their father to follow her.

One evening, after having softened Revertégat's heart by all the cajoling she was capable of, she ended by boldly asking him for Philippe's liberty.

"Of course," exclaimed the gaoler, "if it only depended on me, I would open the door to him immediately."

"But it does only depend on you, uncle," Fine innocently answered.

"Ah! so you think. But the next morning they would turn me adrift and send me starving with my two daughters."

These words made the flower-girl look quite serious.

"But," she resumed, after a moment, "if I gave you money! Supposing I loved this youth? supposing I were to implore you with joined hands, to give him back to me?"

"You, you!" exclaimed the astonished gaoler.

He had risen, he gazed at his niece to see if she were not laughing at him. When he observed her grave and troubled manner he bent forward, vanquished, softened, consenting by a sign.

"Faith," he added, "I'll do what you like. You are too good and pretty a girl for me to refuse."

Fine kissed him and spoke of something else. Henceforward she was sure of victory. On several occasions she returned to the conversation, accustoming Revertégat to the idea that he would allow Philippe to escape. She did not wish to throw her relative into poverty, and she offered him a first reward of fifteen thousand francs. This offer dazzled the gaoler, who from that moment belonged to her body and soul.

And that is how Fine had been able to say to Marius with her clever smile. "Follow me. Your brother is saved."

She accompanied the young man to the prison. On the road she related to him all she had been doing, how she had little by little won over her uncle. Marius' straightforward nature set him first of all against the plan. Then he remembered the intrigues to which M. de Cazalis had had recourse and reflected that, after all, he was only making use of the same weapons as his adversaries, and his mind was at ease.

He thanked Fine most touchingly, and was at a loss to know what proof to give her of his gratitude. The young girl, happy beyond measure, hardly listened to his protestations of devotedness.

They could only see Revertégat in the evening. The gaoler from the very first words of the conversation, pointed out his two little girls who were playing in a corner of the lodge, and simply said to Marius:

"Monsieur, they are my excuse: I would not ask a sou, if I had not these children to feed."

This was a painful scene for Marius. He abridged it as much as possible. He was aware that the gaoler was giving way both to self-sacrifice and interest, and if he could not despise him, he none the less felt ill at ease at concluding such a bargain with him.

All was settled in a few minutes. Marius announced that he would leave the following morning for Marseilles and would bring back with him the fifteen thousand francs promised by Fine. He would get them from his banker: his mother had left a sum of fifty thousand francs, which

was deposited with M. Bérard, whose house was one of the most important and best known of the city. The flower-girl was to remain at Aix and there await the young man's return.

He set out full of hope, with the idea that his brother was already free, but as he stepped out of the diligence at Marseilles he learned a terrible piece of news, which completely staggered him. The banker Bérard had just been made a bankrupt.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BANKRUPTCY, AS THERE ARE MANY.

MARIUS hastened to the banker Bérard. He could not believe the bad news, he possessed all the confidence of a straightforward mind. On the road he said to himself that the rumours that were afloat were perhaps, after all, only calumnies, and so he clung to false hopes. The loss of his fortune at this moment amounted to his brother's discomfiture. It seemed to him that chance would not be so cruel—the public must be mistaken, Bérard would hand him his money.

When he entered the banking-house, he was seized with a pang of anguish. He saw the terrible reality. The offices were empty; and these spacious rooms, deserted and calm, with their closed wirework cages, appeared to him funeral like.

It is difficult to conceive what mournful desolation a fortune that is breaking up leaves behind it. From the counting-house, ledgers, papers, escaped a vague odour of ruin. Seals were to be seen everywhere with their white bands and large blotches of red wax.

Marius crossed three rooms without meeting anyone. He at length discovered a clerk who had come to remove a few objects belonging to him from a desk, and who answered him sharply that M. Bérard was in his office.

The young man entered all of a tremble, forgetting to close the door. He perceived the banker quietly at work,

writing letters, setting papers in order and balancing accounts. He was young, tall, had a handsome and intelligent face, was dressed with great care, wore rings on his fingers, and presented the appearance of a gallant and wealthy man. One would have said he had just had a brush-up to receive his customers and explain his disaster to them himself.

Moreover his attitude appeared courageous. This man was either a victim of circumstances, full of resignation, or else an arrant rascal brazening out his infamy.

On seeing Marius enter, he looked him in the face, and his countenance wore an expression of sad straightforwardness.

"I was awaiting you, dear sir," he said, in an unsteady voice. "You see I am waiting for all those whose ruin I have brought about. I shall have courage to the end, I want each of them to assure himself that I have no cause to be ashamed."

He took up a register from his writing-table and opened it with some affectation.

"Here are my accounts," he continued. "My liabilities are a million, my assets one million five hundred thousand francs. The Court will adjudicate and I believe my creditors will lose nothing. I am the first to suffer, I have lost my fortune and credit, I have allowed insolvent debtors to rob me in a most bare-faced way."

Marius had not yet uttered a word. In face of Bérard's broken-down serenity, in presence of this display of austere grief he could not find a single reproach, not one word of indignation. He almost pitied this man who was heading the storm.

"Sir," he said to him at last, "why did you not warn me when you saw your affairs getting into a mess and turning to the bad? My mother was a friend of your mother's. In remembrance of our former intimacy, you should have made me withdraw this money, which you were about to compromise, from your control. Your present ruin strips me of everything, and plunges me in despair."

Bérard ran forward and grasped Marius' hands.

“Do not say that!” he exclaimed, in a voice broken by tears, “do not overwhelm me. Ah! you have no idea of the regret that is tormenting me. When I saw the abyss I sought to catch hold of the branches; I struggled till the last moment, hoping to be able to save the amounts deposited in my hands. You cannot imagine what terrible risks are run by those who deal in money.”

Marius had nothing to answer. What could he say to a man who found his excuse in self-accusation? He had no proofs, he did not dare call Bérard a scamp, it only remained to him to withdraw. The banker spoke in such an aggrieved tone of voice, in such a convinced and straightforward manner that he hastened to go away and leave him to himself. He felt oppressed at his misfortune.

As he was crossing the empty offices again, the clerk who had at last gathered his things together, took his bundle and hat and followed him. This clerk was muttering between his teeth. At each step he looked in a strange way at Marius and shrugged his shoulders. Below, on the pavement, he suddenly approached him.

“Well!” said he, “what think you of M. Bérard? He’s a splendid actor, isn’t he? The door of his office was open and it made me laugh to see his distressed manner. He almost wept, the honest fellow! Permit me to tell you that you have just allowed yourself to be duped in the most beautiful way.”

“I don’t understand you,” answered Marius.

“So much the better. That is because you are an honest man. For my part, I have just left this shop with profound satisfaction. I long since expected a stroke of business like this: I foresaw the issue of this high comedy of theft. I possess a peculiar knack for ferreting out jobbery in a firm.”

“Explain yourself.”

“Oh! the story is simple. I’ll relate it to you in a few words. Ten years ago Bérard started a banking business. At the present day I have no doubt that he prepared his bankruptcy from the first moment. This was his reasoning: ‘I wish to be rich because I have many desires, and to be so as rapidly as possible, because I am

in a hurry to satisfy them. But the straight road is rough and long, I prefer to follow the paths of cheating and get my million together in ten years. I will make myself a banker, I shall have a counting-house where I will take the people's money as a bird-catcher snares the feathered songsters. Each year I will pilfer a round sum. That will last as long as is necessary, I will stop when my pockets are full. Then I shall quietly suspend payment; on two millions that will have been entrusted to me, I will generously return two or three hundred thousand francs to my creditors. The remainder, hidden away in a little corner I know of, will assist me to live as I desire, as an idler and a voluptuary.' Do you understand, dear sir?"

Marius had listened to the clerk with stupefaction.

"But," he exclaimed at last, "what you are telling me is impossible. Bérard has just confided to me that his liabilities amount to a million, and his assets to a million and a half. We shall all be paid in full."

The clerk held his sides with laughter.

"Ah! Goodness, gracious! How simple you are!" he continued. "Do you really believe in these assets of a million and a half? First of all, they will deduct Madame Bérard's marriage-portion from the amount. Now, Madame Bérard brought her husband fifty thousand francs, which he, in the marriage contract, transformed into the handsome sum of five hundred thousand francs. That, as you see, was a little robbery of four hundred and fifty thousand francs. There remains a million, and that million is almost entirely represented by suspicious book debts. Oh! the proceeding is simple enough. There are persons at Marseilles who sell their signatures for a hundred sou piece; and they live very well at this easy and lucrative business. Bérard had got men of straw to sign him numbers of acceptances, and he pocketed the money which he now pretends he lent to insolvent debtors. If they give you ten per cent. on your claim, you may esteem yourself lucky; and you will only receive that in eighteen months or two years when the assignees of the bankruptcy have concluded their work."

Marius was completely upset. Thus the fifty thousand francs left him by his mother would be useless to him. He wanted money at once and they talked to him of waiting two years. And his ruin and despair were the work of a scoundrel who had just been laughing at him! He flew into a passion.

"This Bérard is a rascal," he burst out. "He will be vigorously hunted down. Society must be freed of these crafty men who enrich themselves by the ruin of others. The galleys await them."

The clerk again burst out laughing.

"Bérard," he continued, "will perhaps get a fortnight's imprisonment. That is all. You don't seem to understand again? Listen to me."

The two young men had been standing on the pavement, elbowed by the passers-by. They returned into the hall of the banker's house.

"You say the galleys await Bérard," continued the clerk. "The galleys only await clumsy folk. During the ten years that our customer has been hatching and nursing his bankruptcy he has taken his precautions; infamy, such as this, is quite a work of art. His accounts are in order, and he has the law on his side. He knew beforehand how slight was the risk he ran. The most the court can do will be to reproach him with heavy personal expenses; they will tax him, besides, with having put a large number of bills of exchange in circulation, which is a ruinous way of procuring money. The penalties for such mistakes are ridiculous. Bérard, as I told you, will get a fortnight, or a month's imprisonment at the most."

"But," exclaimed Marius, "cannot one go and proclaim this man's crime on the public square, prove it, and have him sentenced?"

"No, indeed! one cannot do that. Proofs are wanting, I tell you. Besides Bérard has not lost his time, he has foreseen everything, he has made powerful friends at Marseilles, imagining he would some day have need of their influence. He is now a sort of inviolable personage in this city of coteries: if they touched a single hair of his head all his friends would yell with grief and rage. The

most they could do would be to imprison him for form's sake. When he leaves gaol he will find his little million again, he will make a show of luxury and will easily conquer fresh esteem. You will then meet him driving out in his carriage, extended on his cushions, and the wheels of his vehicle will splash you with mud; you will find him indifferent and idle, with a large establishment, enjoying all the luxuries of life. And to worthily crown this success in the art of robbery, they will bow to him, like him, and open him a new credit of honour and consideration."

Marius preserved ferocious silence. The clerk made him a slight bow, and was about to leave him.

"It is thus the farce is played," he added. "I had all that on my heart, and am glad to have met you to ease myself. Now, a piece of advice: keep what I have told you to yourself, say good-bye to your money, and do not bother any more about the sorry business. Reflect and you will see I am right. Good-day."

Marius remained alone. He had a tremendous desire to rush upstairs to Bérard and slap him in the face. All his instincts of probity and justice had risen up within him, urging him to drag the banker out into the street and proclaim his crime. Then his passion gave way to disgust, he remembered his poor mother shamelessly deceived by this man, and from that moment he felt nothing but crushing contempt for him. He followed the clerk's advice and left the house, endeavouring to forget that he had had money and that a rascal had robbed him of it.

What the clerk had told him was confirmed in every point. Bérard was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for simple bankruptcy.

A year afterwards, with florid complexion and easy, insolent bearing, he sauntered about Marseilles displaying the jovial humour of a wealthy man. He rang his purse in the clubs, restaurants and theatres, everywhere in fact where pleasure could be purchased, and on his road he invariably met with complaisant persons, or dupes who bowed to him lowly.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO
SPEND THIRTY THOUSAND FRANCS A
YEAR WHEN ONLY EARNING
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED.

MARIUS went mechanically down to the port. He walked straight on without noticing whither he was going. He was, so to say, in a state of stupefaction. One sole thought occupied his otherwise empty brain, and kept repeating in a sing-song way that he needed fifteen thousand francs without a moment's loss of time. He cast about him the vague glance of persons in despair, as though he were looking on the ground to see if he could not find the money he required in the interstices of the paving-stones. Down at the port he felt a longing to be rich. The merchandise piled up along the quays, the ships bringing fortunes in their holds, the noise, the motion of that money-making crowd, irritated him. Never before had he felt his poverty so strongly. For a moment he was filled with envy, revolt, and bitter jealousy. He asked himself why he was poor whilst others were rich.

And still that ever-recurring thought kept ringing in his head, fit to break it. Fifteen thousand francs! fifteen thousand francs! His brother was awaiting him, and he could not go back empty-handed. He had only a few hours in which to save him from infamy. But he could form no plan, his bewildered senses did not furnish him with a single practical idea. He turned about in his powerlessness, exerted every effort of his mind in vain, he struggled, almost choking with rage and anguish. He could never ask his employer, M. Martelly, to lend him fifteen thousand francs. His earnings were too small to warrant such a loan. Moreover, he knew the ship-owner's upright principles, and dreaded his reproaches if he admitted to him that he wished to purchase another's conscience. M. Martelly would at once have refused the money.

Marius suddenly had an idea. He would not stay to

discuss it in his mind, but hurried off to his lodging in the Rue Sainte. On the same floor as himself there resided a young clerk, named Charles Blétry, who was employed as collector at the soap-works of Messrs. Daste and Degans. A kind of intimacy had sprung up between these two young fellows living side by side. Marius had been won over by Charles's gentleness; for the latter went regularly to church, led an exemplary life, and appeared to be of the strictest honesty. Yet during the past two years he had been spending money pretty freely. He had refurnished his lodging in a luxurious style, buying carpets, hangings, mirrors, and rich furniture. Besides this, he came home later, lived more expensively; but still remained gentle and honest, quiet and pious.

At first, his neighbour's outlay rather astonished Marius, who could not understand how a clerk earning eighteen hundred francs a year could afford to purchase such expensive things. But Charles told him that he had inherited some money, and that he intended shortly to resign his position and live on his means. He even placed himself and his purse at his disposal; but Marius declined. To-day, he recalled this offer, and was about to knock at the young man's door and ask him for the means to save his brother. A loan of fifteen thousand francs would not perhaps inconvenience him, seeing how lavishly he was spending his money. He proposed to himself to repay the amount in instalments, persuaded that his neighbour would grant him all the time necessary.

The clerk, however, was not at home in the Rue Sainte, and as Marius was pressed for time he went off to Messrs. Daste and Degans' soap-works, situated on the Boulevard des Dames. When he arrived there and asked for Charles Blétry, it seemed to him that he was eyed in a strange manner. The workmen told him to address himself to M. Daste, who was in his office. Surprised at this reception, Marius decided to do so, and found the manufacturer engaged in conversation with three gentlemen, who stopped talking directly he showed himself.

"Can you tell me, sir," inquired the young man, "if M. Charles Blétry is at the factory?"

Daste exchanged a rapid glance with one of the persons present, a stout, pale, and severe-looking man.

"M. Charles Blétry will return presently," he replied. "Please wait for him. Are you a friend of his?"

"Yes," replied Marius, simply. "He resides in the same house as I do. I have known him for about three years."

There was a pause. The young man, thinking he was in the way, added, with a bow, and walking towards the door:

"I am much obliged to you. I will wait for him outside."

Then the stout gentleman leant forward and said a few words to the manufacturer in a low voice. M. Daste signed to Marius to stay.

"Have the goodness to wait here," he exclaimed. "Your presence may be useful to us. You must know something of M. Blétry's mode of living, and can no doubt give us some information about him."

Marius, greatly astonished, and not understanding, hesitated.

"Excuse me," resumed M. Daste with great politeness, "I see that my words surprise you." And indicating the stout man, he went on: "That gentleman is the police commissary of the district, and I have sent for him to arrest Charles Blétry who has robbed us of sixty thousand francs in two years."

On hearing Charles accused of theft, Marius understood everything. He accounted for the young fellow's lavish expenditure, and shuddered at the thought that he had been on the point of accepting his offers of service. He would never have believed that his neighbour could have been guilty of a mean action. He knew very well that there existed at Marseilles, as in all great centres of industry, clerks who robbed their employers in order to satisfy their vices and their love of luxury; he had often heard of clerks earning a hundred or a hundred and fifty francs a month, and who managed to lose immense sums in gambling in the clubs, to throw gold to loose women, and to idle away their time in

restaurants and cafés. But Charles seemed so pious, so modest, so honest, he had played the hypocrite so artfully, that Marius had been taken in by these appearances of probity, and he even now entertained doubts despite M. Daste's formal accusation.

He seated himself and awaited the development of the drama. As a matter of fact he could not very well have done otherwise. During half-an-hour a mournful silence reigned in the office. The manufacturer was writing, whilst the police commissary and the two officers, mute and looking half asleep, gazed vaguely before them with terrible patience. Such a sight was calculated to make Marius honest had he been disposed to be otherwise. A step was heard outside, and the door slowly opened.

"Here's our man," said M. Daste, rising from his seat.

Charles Blétry entered quite unsuspectingly, without even noticing the persons who were there.

"You wish to see me, sir?" he asked, in that drawling voice peculiar to clerks when addressing their employers.

As M. Daste was looking him straight in the face, he turned round and beheld the police commissary, whom he knew by sight. He became ghastly pale, understanding that he was lost, and his whole body trembled. He had just walked into the meshes of the law with his eyes shut. Seeing that his frightened looks were accusing him, he tried to pull himself together and to recover a little coolness and audacity.

"Yes, I wish to see you!" M. Daste exclaimed, violently. "And you know why, don't you? Ah! scoundrel, you'll never rob me again!"

"I don't know what you mean," stammered Blétry. "I've never robbed you. What is it you accuse me of?"

The police commissary had seated himself at the manufacturer's desk, ready to draw up his report, whilst the two officers were guarding the door.

"Kindly tell me, sir," said the police commissary to M. Daste, "how you discovered that M. Blétry had been guilty of embezzling your money."

Then M. Daste told the story of the crime. He noticed that occasionally his collector was an extremely long

time in getting in certain monies. But as he had unlimited confidence in the young man, he attributed these delays to the dilatoriness of his customers. The first embezzlement must have occurred quite eighteen months back. Anyhow, the day before, one of his customers being on the verge of bankruptcy, he had gone personally to demand payment of an account amounting to five thousand francs, and had thereupon learnt that Blétry had collected it some weeks previously. Much alarmed, he had hurried back to the factory, and, by going through the cashier's books, had convinced himself that about sixty thousand francs were missing.

The police commissary then proceeded to question Blétry. The latter, taken unawares and unable to deny the facts, concocted a ridiculous story.

"One day," he said, "I lost my pocket-book containing forty thousand francs. I had not the courage to tell M. Daste of this great misfortune, so I embezzled some money to gamble on the stock exchange, hoping to win and so reimburse the firm."

The police commissary asked him for particulars, confused him by his questions, and forced him to contradict himself. Blétry then tried another falsehood.

"You are right," he resumed, "I did not lose the pocket-book. I prefer to tell you everything. The truth is I was robbed myself. I gave shelter to a young man who was hard-up. One night he went off with my collector's bag, and it contained a considerable sum of money."

"Come, don't make your crime worse by lying," said the commissary, with that terrifying patience of police officials. "You know very well that we can't believe you. It's no use inventing such rigmарoles." He then turned to Marius and continued: "I asked M. Daste to detain you, sir, thinking you might be useful to us in our inquiry. The accused is, you said, your neighbour. Do you know anything about his mode of life. Will you not beseech him with us to tell the truth?"

Marius felt dreadfully embarrassed. He pitied Blétry, who was reeling like a drunken man and looking at him

imploringly. The man was not a hardened scoundrel; no doubt he had given way to temptation, to a weak mind and heart. But Marius's conscience would not be stilled, and commanded him to say what he knew. He did not reply to the police commissary directly, but preferred to address himself to Blétry.

"Listen, Charles," he said, "I do not know whether you are guilty. I have always found you good and quiet. I am aware that you support your mother and that you are beloved by all who know you. If you have been guilty of wrong, admit your folly: you will cause less suffering to those who love and esteem you by frankly owning your guilt and showing sincere repentance."

Marius spoke in a gentle and convincing voice. Blétry, whom the curt words of the police commissary had left dumb and inwardly irritated, gave way before his friend's kindness. He thought of his mother, he thought of the esteem and the friendships he was about to lose, and his emotion nearly choked him. He burst into sobs, weeping hot tears in his closed hands; and for some minutes no sound was heard but the heartrending cry of his despair. It was a complete avowal. The spectators of the scene remained silent.

"Well! yes," Blétry exclaimed at last, amidst his tears. "I have robbed, I'm a scoundrel—I didn't know what I was about—I commenced by taking a few hundred francs, then I required a thousand, two thousand, five thousand, ten thousand francs at a time—It seemed as if someone was behind me, urging me on—And my needs, my appetites were ever increasing."

"But what did you do with all that money?" asked the police commissary.

"I don't know—I gave it away, lost it at play, devoured it somehow—You don't know the life—I was happy enough in my poverty and troubled with nothing, I loved to go to church and to live worthily like an honest man. But then I had a taste of luxury and vice, I got to know women, I bought expensive things—I was mad."

"Can you give me the names of the women with whom you squandered the money you were embezzling?"

"As if I knew their names! I met them here, there, everywhere, in the streets and at public balls. They came because I had my pockets full of gold, and they went off when they were empty—Then I lost a lot playing baccara at the clubs—What turned me into a thief was seeing certain well-born young men throwing their money out of window and revelling in wealth and idleness. I wanted to know women as they did, to have noisy joys, nights spent in gambling and debauchery—I required thirty thousand francs a year, and I was only earning eighteen hundred—so I ended by stealing."

The poor wretch, suffocating, overcome by grief, dropped on to a chair. Marius went up to M. Daste who was also much affected, and beseeched him to be merciful. He then hastened to withdraw from a scene which made his heart bleed. He left Blétry quite prostrated by a kind of nervous stupor.

Some months later he learnt that the young man had been condemned to five years' imprisonment.

Once outside, Marius experienced a great feeling of relief. He understood that by assisting at Charles's arrest he had received a lesson. A few hours before, when down at the port, he had indulged in some evil ideas of fortune. He had just seen where such thoughts might lead him. And suddenly he remembered why he had gone to the soap-works. He had only another hour left in which to find the fifteen thousand francs which were to save his brother.

CHAPTER XV.

PHILIPPE REFUSES TO SAVE HIMSELF.

MARIUS had to admit to himself how powerless he was. He knew not at what door to knock.

It is not easy for a simple clerk to borrow fifteen thousand francs in the course of an hour. He walked slowly down the Rue d'Aix, straining his mind but finding nothing in his wearied brain. Money troubles are terrible:

one would sooner battle with an assassin than fight against the imperceptible and crushing phantom of poverty. Nobody has ever yet been able to conjure up a five-franc piece.

When the young man, hopeless and at his wits' end, reached the Cours Belzunce, he decided to return to Aix empty-handed. The coach was about to start, and there was only one vacant seat left, an outside one. He took it with delight, preferring to remain in the open air, for anxiety was stifling him, and he hoped that the vast horizon of the open country would calm his fever. It was a sad journey. In the morning, he had passed the same trees, the same hills, and hope, which brought a smile to his lips, then shed a joyous brightness over the fields and slopes. Now, as he again beheld the same country-side, he enveloped it in all the gloom that was weighing on his mind.

The heavy vehicle lumbered on; the cultivated land, the pine-woods, the little hamlets succeeded each other at either side of the road; and Marius found in each change of landscape a deeper air of mourning, a more poignant grief. Night fell, and it seemed to him that the entire country was covered by an immense pall.

On reaching Aix, he walked slowly towards the prison. He felt that he would always arrive too soon with his evil news. When he entered the gaol, it was nine o'clock. Revertégat and Fine were killing time by having a game at cards on a corner of the table. The flower-girl jumped up gleefully and ran to meet the young man.

"Well?" she asked him, with a bright smile, and throwing back her head coquettishly.

Marius had not the courage to reply. He sat down exhausted.

"Speak up!" cried Fine. "You've got the money?"

"No," the young man answered, simply.

After a moment he told them of Bérard's failure. Blétry's arrest, all the misfortunes he had encountered at Marseilles. He wound up by saying:

"I am now no more than a poverty-stricken wretch. My brother will remain a prisoner."

The flower-girl remained painfully surprised. Her hands clasped, in that attitude of pity peculiar to Provençal women, she repeated in a rueful tone of voice:

"How sad, how sad!"

She looked at her uncle and seemed to be urging him to speak. Revertégat eyed the two young people compassionately. It was evident that a struggle was taking place within him. At length he seemed to make up his mind, and said to Marius:

"Listen to me, sir. My duties have not hardened me to such an extent as to render me insensible to the sufferings of worthy people. I have already said why I was willing to sell you your brother's freedom. But I do not wish you to think that the love of money alone is prompting me. If unfortunate circumstances prevent your placing me at once out of the reach of poverty, I will nevertheless open the door to M. Philippe. You can come to my assistance later on, and pay me the fifteen thousand francs little by little when you are able to do so."

Fine clapped her hands on hearing these words. She flung her arms round her uncle's neck and embraced him heartily. Marius looked very grave as he replied:

"I cannot accept your sacrifice. I am already reproaching myself with having tempted you to disregard your duty, and I refuse to increase my responsibility by also casting you adrift without a crust of bread."

The flower-girl turned to the young man almost angrily.

"Hold your tongue!" she cried. "M. Philippe must be saved. I intend that he shall be. Besides, we don't need you to open the prison doors. Come, uncle. If M. Philippe is willing, his brother can have nothing to say."

Marius followed the young woman and the gaoler who were going in the direction of the prisoner's cell. They had taken a dark lantern, and were gliding softly along the passages in order not to excite remark. All three entered the cell and closed the door behind them. Philippe was asleep.

Revertégat, moved by his niece's tears, had softened the prison regulations as much as possible for the young

man: he brought him lunch and dinner which Fine herself prepared; he lent him books, and had even given him an additional rug. The cell had been made habitable, and Philippe was not too uncomfortable there. He knew, moreover, that they were working for his escape. He woke up and held out his hands effusively to his brother and the flower-girl.

"You have come for me?" he asked smiling.

"Yes," answered Fine. "Dress yourself at once."

Marius remained silent. His heart was beating quickly. He feared that a strong desire for liberty might lead his brother to accept the means of flight which he himself had thought right to decline.

"So everything is agreed and arranged?" resumed Philippe. "I may go off without fear or regret? You have paid the promised amount? You don't answer me, Marius."

Fine hastened to intervene.

"Haven't I told you to make haste?" she cried. "What are you troubling yourself about?"

She threw him his clothes, and added that she would wait in the passage. Marius stopped her.

"Excuse me," he said, "I cannot leave my brother in ignorance of our misfortunes."

And, in spite of Fine's impatience, he related again the result of his journey to Marseilles. He, however, gave his brother no advice but left him at full liberty to come to a decision himself.

"So then," exclaimed Philippe, completely crushed, "you've not given the money to the gaoler, and we're without a copper?"

"Don't worry yourself about that," replied Revertégat, drawing nearer. "You can help me later on."

The prisoner said nothing. He was no longer thinking of his escape, his thoughts were centered on his poverty, on the sorry figure he would henceforth cut, once he was at liberty. No more smart clothes, no more strolls in fashionable haunts, no more love adventures. But besides all this he had some chivalrous feelings, some poetical ideas which forbade him accepting Revertégat's sacrifice.

He lay back on his miserable bed, drew the clothes up to his chin, and said quietly:

"Very well, I shall stay where I am."

Marius's face beamed. Fine looked overwhelmed. She tried to prove the necessity for the escape, she spoke of the public exhibition, of the infamy of the pillory. She grew excited and looked superb in her passion, and Philippe gazed at her admiringly,

"My beautiful child," he replied, "you might succeed in making me yield if I had not grown blind and obstinate in this cell. But really I have done enough mean things already without wishing to burden my conscience with any more. We are in the hands of Providence. Moreover, all is not yet lost. Marius will free me; he'll find the money somehow, you see if he don't. You shall come and fetch me when you've paid my ransom. And we'll fly together, and I'll give you a kiss——"

He spoke almost gaily. Marius took his hand.

"Thanks, brother," he said. "Be of good cheer."

Fine and Revertégat went out, whilst Philippe and Marius remained alone a few minutes. They had some serious and affecting conversation: they spoke of Blanche, and the child she was expecting. When the visitors were back in the gaoler's room, the flower-girl in despair, asked Marius what he thought of doing.

"I shall make some further efforts," he replied. "Unfortunately we have not much time, and I scarcely know where to seek assistance."

"I can give you a piece of advice" observed Revertégat. "There's a banker in this town, living close by here, named Rostand, who would perhaps consent to lend you a considerable sum. But I must warn you that this Rostand has the reputation of being an usurer."

Marius had not the choice of means.

"Thanks," he said. "I will call on the man to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE USURERS.

M. ROSTAND was a clever man. He pursued his shameful calling undisturbed. To give an honest appearance to his trade, he had opened a banking-house; and having paid for the license, he was legally established. At times, he could even be a trifle honest, and would lend money at the same rate of interest as the other bankers of the town. But there was, so to say, a back office in his establishment, wherein he took delight in elaborating his knavish schemes.

Six months after the opening of his bank, he became the managing director of a company of usurers, a black band which entrusted him with certain funds for investment. The combination was of a simplicity quite patriarchal. People endowed with the bump of usury, and who feared to indulge their propensity at their own risk and peril, brought him their money and requested him to turn it to good account. By these means he always had a considerable capital to turn over, and was enabled to take full advantage of needy borrowers.

Those who furnished the money remained in the background. He had solemnly undertaken to lend at a fabulous rate of interest, at fifty, sixty and even eighty per cent. The sleeping partners met at his office once a month, he produced his accounts, and they shared the spoil. But he so arranged matters as to keep the larger share for himself—in fact, he robbed the robbers.

It was especially against the small traders that he directed his operations. When a shopkeeper came to see him the day before a payment fell due, he imposed most exorbitant terms. The tradesman invariably accepted them; and in this way he had brought about more than fifty failures in ten years. Moreover, all was fish that came to his net; he would as soon lend five francs to a market-woman as a thousand to a cattle-dealer; he kept a sharp look-out, and never lost an opportunity of investing ten francs one

day to receive twelve the next. He was on the watch for noble youths, fast young men who fling their money out of window; he filled their hands with gold, so that they might throw the more, and he stood outside to pick up what they threw. He also took trips into the country and tempted the peasants; when the crops failed he dispossessed them piece by piece of their land and farms.

His house had thus become a veritable pit-fall which swallowed up whole fortunes. The individuals, the entire families he had ruined were well-known. No one was ignorant of his underhand dealings. His sleeping partners were pointed at in the streets, wealthy men, ex-officials, merchants and even workmen. But proof was lacking. His banker's license shielded him, and he was too clever to allow himself to be caught napping.

Since he had first started his nefarious speculations, Rostand had only once found himself in danger. The affair created a great sensation. A lady belonging to a wealthy family borrowed a rather large sum of him; she was very pious and had bereft herself of her fortune by giving money in charity on all sides. Knowing that she was completely without means, he insisted upon her signing bills with her brother's name. Having these forgeries in his possession, he was certain of being paid by the brother, who would be anxious to avoid a scandal. The poor lady signed as required. Charity had ruined her, and the weak kindness of her nature brought about her fall.

His calculations turned out correct, and the first bills were paid; but as more and more were presented, the brother grew tired of paying and determined to get to the bottom of the matter. He called on Rostand and threatened to expose him; he said that he would sooner see his sister disgraced than allow himself to be further robbed with impunity by such a scoundrel. The usurer, thoroughly cowed, gave up the bills he still possessed. He did not, however, lose a copper on the transaction, having advanced the loan at cent per cent.

Since then, Rostand had been extremely careful. He invested the capital of the black band with a skill which won him the admiration and confidence of the usurers.

Whilst his sleeping partners were airing themselves in the sunshine, like worthy people who would never rob a soul, he remained buried in a great dark office: it was there that the golden coins of the concern grew and multiplied.

Rostand had ended by acquiring quite an affection for his fraudulent and thievish trade. Some members of the band applied their profits to satisfying their passions, their appetites for luxurious and dissolute living. He took his sole delight in being a clever rascal; he felt as much interest in each of his operations as if it had been a drama or a comedy he was witnessing; he applauded himself when his plans succeeded, and he then felt the pride, the joy of a successful author; then he spread out on a table the money he had stolen and lost himself in all the voluptuous sensations of the miser.

It was to such a man that Revertégat had naïvely sent Marius.

The latter knocked at Rostand's door on the following morning towards eight o'clock. It was a heavy square house, and the closed shutters gave it a bare cold appearance, an air of mystery and mistrust. A toothless old waiting-woman, attired in a dirty, ragged, cotton gown, opened the door a few inches.

"M. Rostand?" asked Marius.

"He is in, but engaged," replied the servant, without opening the door any wider.

The young man, losing patience, pushed the door open and entered the hall.

"Very well," he said, "I'll wait."

Surprised and scarcely knowing what to do, the servant, seeing she could not get rid of him, took him up to the first floor, and left him by himself in a kind of ante-room. It was a small dark apartment hung with greenish wall paper, discoloured by large damp stains. The only furniture consisted in a rush-bottomed chair, upon which Marius seated himself. Opposite him, an open door showed the interior of an office in which a clerk was writing with a quill pen, which made a grating noise as it travelled over the paper. There was another door on

his left which probably led to the banker's private room.

Marius waited a long time. The stale smell of old papers pervaded the atmosphere around him. The apartment was sickeningly dirty, and the nakedness of the walls gave it a lugubrious appearance. Dust was accumulated in all the corners, and cobwebs hung from the ceiling. The young man was suffocating and getting out of patience with the grating of the quill pen which kept on increasing. Suddenly he heard voices in the adjoining room and, as the words reached him clear and distinct, he was on the point of discreetly moving further off, when certain expressions rooted him to the spot.

There are some conversations which it is permissible to overhear, scrupulousness not being intended as a safeguard of the privacy of certain people. A harsh voice, no doubt that of the master of the house, was saying with friendly bluntness:

"Gentlemen, we are all here, let's talk business. The sitting is open. I will render you a faithful account of my operations of the month, and we will then proceed to the division of the profits."

There was slight noise, a sound of private conversations dying away. Marius, who so far had not understood, felt nevertheless a lively curiosity: he guessed that some strange scene was taking place on the other side of the door. As a matter of fact, the usurer Rostand was closeted with his worthy associates of the black band.

The young man had called just at the time of their meeting, when the managing director was about to produce his accounts, explain his operations, and divide the spoil. The harsh voice continued:

"Before entering into details, I must inform you that this month's results are not so good as last month's. We then had an average of sixty per cent., to-day we have only fifty-five."

Various exclamations arose, similar to the protesting murmurs of a dissatisfied crowd. There must have been about fifteen persons in the room.

"Gentlemen," continued Rostand, with bitter raillery, "I have done what I could and you ought to thank me.

The business becomes more difficult every day. However, here are my accounts and I will give you a rapid statement of some of the affairs I have transacted."

Complete silence ensued for a few seconds. Then there was a rustling of paper and the sound of the leaves of a ledger being turned over. Marius, beginning to understand, listened more attentively than ever. Rostand commenced to go over his various operations, giving some explanations as to each one. He spoke in the sing-song voice of a court official.

"I lent," he said, "ten thousand francs to young Count de Salvy, a youth of twenty, who will attain his majority in nine months' time. He had lost at play, and his mistress, it seems, required a large amount from him. He signed bills at three months for eighteen thousand francs. These bills are post-dated the day of his majority, so as to make all secure. The family owns large estates. It's an excellent affair."

A flattering murmur greeted the usurer's words.

"On the morrow," he continued, "I received a visit from the count's mistress, who was exasperated, her lover only having given her two or three thousand-franc notes. She swore that she would bring me the count bound hand and foot to negotiate a fresh loan. I shall then require the assignment of one of his estates. We have still nine months to shear the young fool, whom his mother leaves without money."

Rostand turned over some leaves of the ledger, and resumed, after a short silence:

"Jourdier—a cloth merchant, who each month requires a few hundred francs to meet his bills. At the present time his business belongs almost entirely to us. I last lent him five hundred francs at sixty per cent. If he asks for anything next month, I'll make him bankrupt and we shall take the whole of his stock.

"Marianne—a market-woman. Every morning she wants ten francs, and every evening she returns me fifteen. I fancy she drinks. It's a small affair, but a certain profit, a fixed income of five francs a day.

"Laurent—a peasant of the Roquefavour district. He

has made over to me, piece by piece, some land he owned near Arc. The ground is worth five thousand francs, and has only cost us two thousand. I had the man evicted from the place, and his wife and children came here and made quite a scene. You'll take into account, I hope, these annoyances I have to put up with?

"André—a miller. He owed us eight hundred francs, and I threatened him with an execution. He hurried here and implored me not to ruin him by letting everyone know of his insolvency. I consented to effect the seizure myself, without employing a bailiff, and by that means I obtained over twelve hundred francs' worth of furniture and linen. I made quite four hundred francs by being good-natured."

A tremor of satisfaction passed through his colleagues. Marius could hear the smothered laughter of those men who were rejoicing at Rostand's cleverness. The latter continued:

"Now for the simple cases: three thousand francs at forty per cent. to the merchant Simon; fifteen hundred francs at fifty per cent. to Charançon, the cattle-dealer; two thousand francs at eighty per cent. to the Marquis de Cantarel; one hundred francs at thirty-five per cent. to the son of Tingrey the notary——"

And Rostand went on thus for a quarter of an hour, reading out names and figures, mentioning loans varying from ten francs to ten thousand, and interest from twenty to one hundred per cent.

"But what were you telling us, my dear friend?" asked a thick husky voice, when he had finished. "You have worked wonderfully well this last month. All these assets are excellent. It is impossible for the profit not to average more than fifty-five per cent. You no doubt made a mistake when you mentioned that figure."

"I never make a mistake," the usurer curtly answered.

Marius, who had almost placed his ear against the door, thought he noticed some hesitation in the wretch's voice.

"I have not yet told you everything," Rostand continued with embarrassment. "We lost twelve thousand francs, a week ago."

These words created quite an uproar, and Marius hoped, for a moment, that the scoundrels would set upon one another.

"Hang it all! listen to me," cried the banker, amid the tumult. "I help you to make enough money for you to excuse me if you lose some once in a way. Besides, it wasn't my fault. I was robbed."

He uttered these words with all the indignation of an honest man. When quiet was restored, he added:

"Here's the whole story—Monier, a corn-dealer and a solvent man, about whom I had obtained reliable information, came to borrow twelve thousand francs. I said I could not lend them myself, but that I knew an old skinflint who would perhaps advance the money at exorbitant interest. He called again the next day and told me that he was ready to agree to any conditions. I told him that five thousand francs interest for six months was required. He agreed.

"You see, it was as good as a gold mine. Whilst I went to fetch the cash, he sat down at my table and wrote out seventeen bills of a thousand francs each. I examined them and placed them on the corner of this desk. Then I conversed a few minutes with Monier who got up, and, after putting his money away, prepared to leave.

"When he was gone, I took the documents to put them in a place of safety. But just fancy, the rogue had changed the bills for a similar bundle of worthless ones, scribbled all over, payable to the deuce knows who, and unsigned. I was robbed, and nearly had a fit. I ran after the swindler whom I found strolling along the Cours in the sunshine. At the first word I uttered, he called me an usurer and threatened me with the police commissary. That Monier has the reputation of being a loyal and upright man, and so, upon reflection, I preferred to hold my tongue."

This story had been several times interrupted by the angry remarks of the listeners.

"You must admit, Rostand, that you have been wanting in energy," observed the husky voice. "Well, we've lost our money, and will only get fifty-five per cent. Another

time, you must look after our interests better. Now we'll divide the profits."

In spite of his anguish and indignation, Marius could not help smiling. Monier's robbery was like a grand piece of comedy, and in his heart he applauded the knave who had cheated a knave. He now knew the trade Rostand followed. He had not lost a word of what had been said in the adjoining room, and he easily pictured to himself the scene that had been passing there.

Leaning back on his chair, his ear close to the door, he could see in his mind's eye the usurers quarrelling among themselves, with eager looks and faces contracted by the evil passions which were agitating them.

He felt a kind of bitter mirth when he thought of his reason for coming to that thieves' den. What simplicity, good heavens! It was there he had thought to obtain the fifteen thousand francs which were to save Philippe, and he had been waiting an hour for the banker to turn him out like a beggar. Or else Rostand would demand fifty per cent. interest and rob him impudently. At that thought, and with the knowledge that there was there, close to him, a meeting of rascals who throve on the shame and misfortunes of a town, he jumped up and laid his hand on the door-handle. One could hear the clink of gold within the room.

The usurers were dividing their spoil. Each one was pocketing his share of a month's swindling. That money, which they were counting and whose music voluptuously titillated their flesh, seemed at times to sob aloud amidst the quivering silence, broken only by the banker's voice uttering figures with metallic harshness. He calculated each one's share, named an amount and let fall a pile of jingling coins.

Marius turned the handle, and, with pale face and resolute gaze, stood a few seconds silent in the doorway.

The young man had a strange spectacle before him. Rostand was standing at his table; behind him was an open safe from which he took handfuls of gold. Around the table were seated the members of the black band, some awaiting their share, others pocketing the money they had just received. Every minute, the banker consulted

his accounts, examining a ledger, and doled out the money with a careful hand. His confederates were watching his movements.

At the sound of the opening door, all the heads turned quickly round with fright. And, when they beheld Marius, grave and indignant, they instinctively closed their fingers on their heaps of gold.

For a moment all was confusion and apprehension. The young man recognised the wretches perfectly. He had met them in the streets with heads erect and dignified mien, and he had even bowed to some who might have saved his brother. They were all wealthy, esteemed, and influential; there were among them ex-government officials, landed proprietors, and persons who frequented the churches and drawing-rooms of the town. To see them thus, cringing and paling beneath his gaze, he could not restrain a movement of disgust.

Rostand rushed forward, his eyes blinking feverishly, his thick discoloured lips trembling, all his miser's red and wrinkled face expressing a sort of scared surprise.

"What do you want?" he asked Marius stammering. "You have no right to walk into a house in this manner."

"I wanted fifteen thousand francs," replied the young man, in a cold and scoffing tone of voice.

"I've no money," the usurer hastened to say, retreating to the door of his safe.

"Oh! be easy, I no longer wish to be robbed. I must tell you that I've been waiting an hour on the other side of the door and have heard all you've been saying."

This statement came like the blow of a club, and caused the members of the black band to bow their heads. These men had still some slight feeling of respectability left, and there were some who hid their faces in their hands. Rostand, having no reputation to lose, gradually recovered himself. He again went up to Marius, and raised his voice.

"Who are you?" he cried. "By what right do you come into my house listening at doors? Why do you come into my private office, if you have nothing to ask of me?"

"Who am I?" said the young man, in a calm, quiet

tone, "I am an honest man and you are a rascal. By what right did I listen at this door? By the right that respectable people have of unmasking scoundrels. Why have I come in here? Simply to tell you that you are a villain."

Rostand was trembling with rage. He could not account for the presence of this avenger who thus told him the truth to his face. He was about to shout out, to fall upon Marius, when the latter energetically motioned him back.

"Keep quiet," he resumed. "I am going, I am stifling here. But I would not go without relieving my feelings a bit. Ah! gentlemen, you have a voracious appetite. You gluttonously share among you the tears and despair of entire families; you gorge yourselves with robbery and swindling. I am glad to be able to trouble your digestion a trifle and to make you shiver with anxiety."

Rostand attempted to stop him, but he continued in a louder tone of voice:

"Highwaymen possess at least courage. They fight and risk their lives. But you, gentlemen, you rob shamelessly in secret. And to think that it was not necessary for you to become swindlers to live! You are every one of you well-to-do. You behave like scoundrels, heaven forgive me! for pleasure!"

Some of the usurers rose menacingly.

"You've never before seen the anger of an honest man, have you?" added Marius, scoffingly. "Truth both annoys and frightens you. You're accustomed to be treated with the respect due to decent people, and, as you have arranged to hide your baseness and to live esteemed by all, you have ended by yourselves believing in the respect accorded to your hypocrisy. Well! I've chosen that for once in your lives you should be insulted as you deserve, and that's why I entered here."

The young men saw that they would fall upon him if he went on. He retreated step by step towards the door, keeping the usurers at bay by the firmness of his gaze. Once there, he stopped again.

"I know very well, gentlemen," he said, "that I cannot

bring you to the bar of human justice. Your wealth, your influence, and your skill render you inviolable. If I were foolish enough to fight against you, it is I, no doubt, who would be crushed. But, anyhow, I shall not have to reproach myself with having been in the company of such men as you without having shewn them my contempt. I would that my words were red-hot irons that would brand you on your faces. The crowd would follow you with its howls, and perhaps the lesson would do you good. Share your gold: if there's an atom of honesty left in you, it will burn your hands."

Marius closed the door and went off. When he reached the street, he smiled sadly. He saw life spread out before him in all its shame and wretchedness, and perceived he was performing the noble and ridiculous part of a Don Quixote of justice and honour.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO SHAMELESS CHARACTERS.

WHEN Marius had related his adventure to the gaoler and flower-girl, the latter exclaimed:

"We're no better off than we were! Why did you lose your temper? That man might have lent you the money."

Women possess a certain obstinacy which renders the feminine conscience easier; therefore Fine, loyal girl though she was, would perhaps have closed her ears at Rostand's, or even have made use of the secrets chance placed in her possession. Revertégat felt rather ashamed at having advised Marius to go to the banker.

"I warned you, sir," he said; "I was aware of the rumours afloat about the man; but I thought a great deal was said out of spite. Had I known the real truth I would never have sent you to him."

Marius and Fine spent the afternoon in forming extravagant plans, in cudgelling their brains in vain for a means of obtaining the fifteen thousand francs necessary for Philippe's safety.

"What!" exclaimed the young woman, "can't we find in all this town some kind soul willing to help us out of our trouble? Are there no rich people here who would lend their money at a reasonable rate? Come, uncle, think a bit. Tell me of some benevolent person whom I may go and plead to on my knees."

Revertégat shook his head.

"Well, yes!" he replied, "there are worthy people here, rich folk who would perhaps assist you. But you have no claim on their bounty, you can't go and ask them for money right off. You must apply to money-lenders or bill-discounters, and, as you've no solid security to offer, you're obliged to deal with usurers. Oh! I know some old misers, old rascals who'd be delighted to have you in their clutches, or else would chuck you out like dangerous beggars."

As Fine listened to her uncle, all these money questions got rather mixed in her young head. She was so frank, so open-hearted, that it seemed to her quite natural and easy to ask for and obtain a large sum in a couple of hours. There are millionaires who can so easily dispose of a few thousand francs without inconveniencing themselves. She therefore persisted.

"Come, think well," she said again, to the gaoler. "Do you really know of nobody we might apply to?"

Revertégat, greatly affected, looked at her anxious face. He would rather not have laid bare the unsavoury realities of life before this young creature, full of the hopes of youth.

"No, really," he replied, "I know of no one. I have spoken to you of old rascals who have shamelessly made large fortunes. They, like Rostand, lend a hundred francs to receive a hundred and fifty at the end of three months."

He hesitated, and then went on in a lower tone of voice: "Shall I relate to you the history of one of these men? His name is Roumieu, and he's a retired notary. His game was to prosecute a terrible chase after inheritances. He would introduce himself into families, where his calling should have made him a confidant and friend, and there study the ground and prepare his ambushes."

Whenever he came across a weak-minded person who had property to leave, he became his creature, circumvented him, and drew him gradually into his meshes by obsequiousness and blandishments, by quite a clever comedy of little attentions and filial tenderness. Ah! he was a clever fellow! You should have seen him fascinate his prey, making himself supple and winning, gaining a hold on the affections of some old man. He ousted the natural heirs, the nephews and cousins, by degrees, and then drew up a new will which despoiled them of their relative's fortune and appointed him sole legatee. But he never hurried matters, he would take ten years to reach his goal, to mature things thoroughly; he advanced with feline craftiness, creeping along in the dark, never springing upon his prey until it lay panting, rendered inert by his gaze and caresses. He hunted inheritances like the tiger hunts game, with noiseless cruelty and a ferocity hidden behind smirks and smiles."

Fine fancied she was being told a story out of the *Arabian Nights*. She listened to her uncle, her eyes wide open with astonishment. Marius was becoming familiar with base actions.

"And you say this man made a large fortune?" he asked the gaoler.

"Yes," the latter replied. "There are some strange stories told which prove Roumieu's amazing cleverness. For instance, ten or fifteen years ago, he worked his way into the good graces of an old lady who possessed a fortune of close upon five hundred thousand francs. It was quite a conquest. The old lady became his slave, almost to the point of refusing herself a crust of bread in order not to encroach upon the wealth she wished to leave to this demon, who possessed her like a devil and obtained complete mastery over her. She was indeed possessed in the true sense of the word; all the holy water of a church would not have been sufficient to cast him out. A visit from Roumieu would plunge her into endless ecstasy. When he bowed to her in the street it was as though she had received a shock, she became quite red with joy. One has never been able to understand

by what flattery, by what skilful and irresistible advance the notary had been able to penetrate so deeply into this heart which was closed by the most exaggerated piety. When the old lady died, she despoiled her direct heirs and left her five hundred thousand francs to Roumieu. Everybody expected this would happen."

After a pause, Revertégat went on:

"Listen, I can give you another instance. The anecdote contains quite a cruel comedy, in which Roumieu gave proof of rare artfulness. A man named Richard, who had amassed several hundred thousand francs in business, retired, and went to live with a worthy couple who nursed him and enlivened his old age. In exchange for their affectionate attentions, the retired merchant had promised to leave them his fortune. They lived on in this expectation; they had several children whom they hoped to establish well in life. But Roumieu happened to pass by, and soon became Richard's intimate friend; he would take him occasionally into the country, and secretly obtained complete mastery over him. The family which had received the retired merchant suspected nothing; they continued to nurse him and await the inheritance.

"During fifteen years they lived thus, quite easy in their minds, forming plans for the future, and feeling certain of being happy and rich. Richard died, and on the morrow Roumieu was found to have inherited his property, to the great surprise and grief of this family, swindled both in its affections and its interest."

"Such is the hunter after inheritances. When he moves one cannot hear the sound of his claws upon the ground; his bounds are too rapid to be measured: he has already sucked his prey dry before he has been observed to be upon it."

Fine felt filled with disgust.

"No, no," she said, "I will never go and ask money of such a man. Don't you know another, uncle?"

"All usurers are alike, my poor child," replied the gaoler; "they all have some indelible stain on their lives. I know an old skinflint who has more than a million, and who lives alone in a dirty tumble-down house. Guil-

laume buries himself out of sight in his foul den. The damp is rotting the walls; the floor is not even paved, but is a sort of muck-heap consisting of mud and filth; cobwebs hang from the ceiling, the dust lies thick over everything, while a dull lugubrious light penetrates through the window-panes which are coated thick with dirt. The old miser seems to sleep amidst impurities, like the waiting spider sleeps in the centre of his web on the beam. When some prey becomes entangled in the nets he has spread, he draws it to him and sucks it dry of its life's blood. His food consists solely of vegetables cooked in plain water, and he never satisfies his hunger. He clothes himself in rags and leads the life of a leprous beggar. And all this is for the sake of keeping the money he has already accumulated, and of adding unceasingly to his store. He only lends at cent per cent."

Fine turned pale at the picture her uncle was setting before her.

"Guillaume has friends, however, who extol his piety," continued the gaoler. "He believes in neither Heaven nor Hell, and would sell the Saviour a second time if he had the opportunity; but he has been clever enough to sham great devoutness, and this piece of acting has won him the esteem of certain narrow minds. He may be met dragging himself about the churches, kneeling behind every pillar, using gallons of holy water.

"Inquire throughout the town, ask anyone what good action this saintly person has ever done. He worships the Almighty, it is said; but he robs his fellow-man. It's impossible to name a single creature he has ever assisted. He lends at an usurious rate, he has never given a copper in charity. Were some poor wretch to be dying at his door, he wouldn't take him a crust of bread nor a glass of water. If he enjoys any kind of esteem, it's because he has stolen it, the same as everything else he possesses."

Revertégat stopped and looked at his niece, scarcely knowing whether he should continue.

"And you would be simple enough to apply to such a man?" said he at last. "I cannot tell you everything, I cannot speak of his vices, for the old scoundrel has ignoble

ones. At times, he forgets his avarice to satisfy his lust. There are shocking stories told of him——”

“Enough!” cried Marius energetically.

Fine, confused and dismayed, bowed her head, having lost all courage and hope.

“I see money is too dear,” the young man resumed, “and that one must sell oneself to obtain it. Ah! if I only had the time to earn the sum we require by hard work!”

Then all three remained silent, unable to find a means of salvation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH THERE IS A GLIMMER OF HOPE.

THE following morning, Marius, urged on by necessity, decided on calling on M. de Girousse.

He had been thinking of applying to the old Count ever since he had been in search of money, but had always refrained from doing so on account of the nobleman's original bluntness. He felt ashamed to own his poverty and blushed at the thought of having to confess to what use he proposed putting the amount he was asking for. Nothing seemed more painful to him than to be compelled to take any third party into his confidence in regard to his brother's escape, and M. de Girousse frightened him more than anyone else.

When the young man called, the mansion was closed, the Count having just left for Lambesc. His errand was so disagreeable to him that he was almost glad at finding no one at home. He remained on the Cours irresolute, not daring to go to Lambesc and in despair at being reduced to inaction.

As he advanced along one of the paths quite upset and with his eyes wandering vaguely about him, he met Fine. It was seven o'clock in the morning. The flower-girl with her best clothes on, had a small travelling bag in her hand and appeared all smiles and determination.

"Where are you off to?" he inquired, with surprise.

"I am going to Marseilles," she answered.

He looked at her curiously, asking for an explanation with his eyes.

"I can tell you nothing," she continued. "I have a plan, but am afraid of failure. I shall return to-night. Come, never despair!"

Marius accompanied Fine to the diligence. When the heavy vehicle set out, he followed it for a long time with his eyes; this carriage bore away his last hope and would bring him back joy or anguish. Up to the evening he watched all the diligences coming in, until at length there remained only one to arrive, and Fine had not yet returned.

The young man, devoured by impatience, walked nervously backward and forward, trembling lest the flower-girl should not return until the following day. In his trouble as to what this last attempt might be, he felt he had not the courage to pass another whole night of uncertainty and anxiety. He walked about the Cours shivering, and a prey to a sort of nightmare.

At last, he perceived the diligence in the distance in the centre of the Rotonde Square. When he heard the wheels rumbling on the stones his heart beat violently. He set his back against a tree and watched the travellers stepping out one by one.

All at once he felt as if rooted to the spot. He had seen the tall form and sad, pale face of Abbé Chastanier appear at one of the open doors of the vehicle, almost opposite to him. When the abbé was on the pavement he extended his hand and helped out a young lady who was none other than Mademoiselle Blanche de Cazalis.

Fine lightly sprang to the ground behind her, without making use of the step. She was beaming with smiles.

The two travellers, guided by Fine, went off in the direction of the Hotel des Princes. Marius, who had remained in the shades of early evening, followed them in a mechanical manner, at a loss to understand, as if stultified.

Fine remained ten minutes in the hotel at most. As she left she caught sight of the young man, and ran towards him in a fit of delight.

"I succeeded in bringing them here," she exclaimed clapping her hands; and now I trust they will obtain what I want. To-morrow we shall be fixed."

Then she took Marius' arm and gave him an account of her journey.

The previous evening she had been struck by something the young man had said about regretting he had not the time before him to earn the amount he required by work. On the other hand the anecdotes her uncle had related, had shown her that it would be impossible to find a money-lender or usurer disposed to be reasonable. The matter was therefore reduced to one of gaining time, of delaying as long as possible the moment when Philippe would be attached to the pilory. What terrified them was this public exhibition, and the infamy it carried with it, by handing over the condemned to the sneers and insults of the mob.

From that moment the young girl's plan was formed; it was a bold plan which would perhaps succeed by reason of its audacity. Her intention had been to go straight to M. Cazalis' to penetrate as far as his niece and describe the picture of the public exhibiton of Philippe, pointing out how insulting such a sight would be for her. She would persuade her to lend assistance and both would go and implore the deputy to intercede. If M. de Cazalis would not consent to ask for pardon he would perhaps try to obtain a postponement.

Fine, however, did not reason out her plans. It seemed to her impossible that Blanche's uncle could resist her tears. She had faith in her devotedness.

The poor child was dreaming with her eyes wide open in hoping that M. de Cazalis would relent at the last moment. This proud and obstinate man had meant to cover Philippe with infamy, and he would have allowed no obstacle to be placed in the way of his vengeance. Had she found herself in his path she would have been crushed, she would have expended her brightest smiles and most touching tears in pure loss.

Fortunately for her she was assisted by circumstances. When she called at the deputy's mansion on the Cours

Bonaparte, she was informed that M. de Cazalis had just left for Paris on business connected with his political position. She then asked to see Mademoiselle Blanche and was told, in a sort of vague manner, that the young lady was absent, that she was travelling.

The flower-girl felt very much embarrassed, but she was obliged to withdraw and to go and think matters over in the street. All her plans were upset, this absence of the uncle and niece deprived her of the support on which she had relied, and she had not a single friend to whom she could appeal. She was determined, however, that she would not lose her last hope and return to Aix as sick at heart as on the previous evening, after having made a useless journey.

All at once she thought of Abbé Chastanier. Marius had often spoken to her of the old priest. She knew how good and devoted he was. Perhaps he might be able to give her some valuable information.

She found him at the house of his sister, the old invalided workwoman, and unbosoming herself to him, explained in a few words the reason of her journey to Marseilles. The priest listened to her with lively concern.

"It is heaven that has sent you here," he answered. "I think, under circumstances such as these, that I may violate the secret that has been entrusted to me. Mademoiselle Blanche is not travelling. Her uncle, wishing to hide her condition and being unable to take her to Paris, has rented a cottage for her in the village of Saint Henri. She is living there with a companion. M. de Cazalis, who has received me back into his good graces and begged me to visit her frequently, has given me considerable power over her. Shall I take you to this poor child, whom you will find very much altered and broken down?"

Fine accepted joyfully.

Blanche turned quite pale when she saw the flower-girl, and began to shed warm tears. There was a large bluish circle round her eyes, the blood had fled from her lips and her cheeks were like white wax. One saw that a terrible cry, the cry of truth, rose within her and made her stagger.

When Fine, in a sweet voice, accompanied by tender caresses, had made her understand that she could perhaps save Philippe from supreme humiliation, she stood straight up, and said in a broken voice :

"I am ready, dispose of me. I hear a child speaking to me unceasingly of its father. I would fain appease the anger of this poor little creature which is yet unborn."

"Well," continued Fine, warmly, "assist us in our work of deliverance. I am certain you will obtain at least a respite if you make the attempt."

"But," observed Abbé Chastanier, "Mademoiselle Blanche cannot go to Aix alone. I must accompany her. I know that if M. de Cazalis hears of this journey, he will load me with bitter reproaches. I accept, however, the responsibility of what I am doing, in the belief that I am acting as an upright man."

As soon as the flower-girl had obtained this consent, she hardly allowed the old man and young girl sufficient time to get a few things together for the journey. She returned to Marseilles with them, pushed them into the diligence and it was thus that she brought them triumphantly into Aix.

The following day Blanche was to pay a visit to the President of the bench of judges who had passed sentence on Philippe.

When Fine had concluded her story, Marius embraced her warmly on both cheeks, a proceeding that made a bloom of pink overspread the young girl's forehead.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RESPITE.

FINE called on Blanche and Abbé Chastanier the next morning. She wished to accompany them to the door of the President's residence, so as to learn the result of their application without a moment's delay.

Marius, who understood that his presence would be painful to Mademoiselle de Cazalis, began strolling about

the Cours like a soul in trouble, and followed the priest and two young girls at a distance. When the supplicants had gone upstairs, the flower-girl perceived the young man and signed to him to come and join her. They both waited, agitated and anxious, without exchanging a word.

The President received Blanche with great commiseration. He understood that she had received the cruellest of blows in this unfortunate business. The poor child could not speak; at the first words she began to sob, and all her supplicating being begged for pity, infinitely better than her prayers could have done.

It was Abbé Chastanier who had to explain their presence and present their petition.

"Sir," said he to the President, "we come with joined hands. Mademoiselle de Cazalis is already broken down by the misfortunes that have overwhelmed her. She implores you for pity's sake to spare her fresh humiliation."

"What would you have me do?" inquired the President in an unsteady voice.

"We desire, if it be possible, that you will prevent a fresh scandal. M. Philippe Cayol has been sentenced to be publicly exhibited, and he is to undergo this punishment within the next few days. But the infamy will not attain him alone; it will not be a case of one culprit being fastened to the pillory, there will be a poor suffering child who now implores your pity. You understand, do you not? The yells and insults of the mob will recoil on Mademoiselle de Cazalis; she will be dragged in the mud by the people, and her name will be passed from mouth to mouth around the abominable post, with sneers of hatred and foul expressions."

The President seemed deeply affected. He preserved silence for a moment. Then, as if struck with a sudden idea, he inquired,

"But, was it M. de Cazalis who sent you here? Is he aware of the steps you are taking?"

"No," replied the priest with frank dignity, "M. de Cazalis does not know we are here. Men have interests, passions that bear them along, and which sometimes prevent them forming a clear judgment as to their position.

Perhaps we are acting contrary to the wish of Mademoiselle de Cazalis' uncle, in coming to solicit you. But above the passions and interests of men, are goodness and justice. And so I do not fear to place my sacred character in jeopardy, by taking upon myself to ask you to be good and just."

"You are right, sir," said the President. "I understand the motives that brought you here; and, as you see, I am deeply affected by your words. Unfortunately I cannot prevent the punishment, it is not within my power to modify a sentence of a Court of Assizes."

Blanche joined her hands.

"Sir," she stammered, "I know not what you can do for me; but, I implore you to be merciful; say to yourself that it is I whom you have sentenced, and endeavour to ease my sufferings."

The President took her hands, and answered her with parental tenderness.

"My poor child, I understand everything. The part I have played in this affair has been a painful one. At this moment I am in despair at not being able to say to you: 'Fear nothing, I have the power to overthrow the pillory, and you shall not be attached to the post with the condemned man.'"

"Then," asked the dejected priest, "the exhibition will take place shortly? You are not even allowed to delay this deplorable scene?"

The President had risen.

"The Minister of Justice," he said, "can put it off at the request of the crown advocate. Will you have this exhibition take place at the end of December? I shall be glad to give you a proof of my compassion and good will."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Blanche, warmly. "Delay the terrible moment as long as possible. I shall perhaps feel stronger."

Abbé Chastanier who knew what Marius' projects were, thought that in presence of the President's promise, he ought to retire without insisting further. So he joined Blanche in accepting the offer made them.

"Very well, that is understood," said the President, accompanying them to the door, "I shall make the request, and I feel sure it will be granted, that justice shall not take its course before the expiration of four months. Until then rest in peace, Mademoiselle. Hope, heaven will perhaps send you some balm to your wounds."

The two supplicants proceeded downstairs.

As soon as Fine perceived them she ran to meet them.

"Well?" she inquired, panting for breath.

"As I told you," answered Abbé Chastanier, "the President cannot prevent the execution of the sentence."

The flower-girl turned quite pale.

"But," the old priest hastened to add, "he has promised to intercede and to have the date of the exhibition adjourned. You have four months before you to labour for the prisoner's welfare."

Marius had approached the little group formed by the two young girls and the abbé, in spite of his desire to stand aloof. The silent, solitary street appeared quite white in the intense heat of the noonday sun; grass had sprung up between the bright paving stones, and a dog, that was giving an airing to its lean spine in the narrow streak of shade which fell from the houses, was the only other living thing about. When the young man heard the words that fell from Abbé Chastanier, he rushed forward and grasped his hands effusively.

"Ah! my father," he exclaimed in a trembling voice, "you have brought me back hope and faith. Since yesterday I had been doubting Providence. How can I thank you, how can I prove to you my gratitude? Now I feel possessed of invincible courage, I am certain of saving my brother."

Blanche, at the sight of Marius, had hung her head. A warm blush had suffused her cheeks. She stood there confused and embarrassed, suffering horribly at the presence of this youth, who was aware of her perjury, and whom her uncle and she had plunged into despair. When the young man's joy had somewhat subsided, he regretted he had approached. The despairing attitude of Mademoiselle de Cazalis aroused his pity.

"My brother has been very guilty," he said to her at last. "Pardon him as I pardon you."

These few words were all he could find. He would have liked to have spoken to her of her child, to have questioned her as to the lot reserved to this poor little creature, to have claimed it in the name of Philippe; but he saw her so bowed down, that he dared not torture her further.

Fine doubtless understood what was passing within him. While he walked a few steps with Abbé Chastanier, she said rapidly to Blanche:

"Remember that I offered you to be a mother to your child. Now, I love you, for I see you have a good heart. Make a sign and I'll hasten to your assistance. But apart from that, I shall be on the watch, for the little creature must not suffer from the folly of its parents."

Blanche's only answer was to silently squeeze the flower-girl's hand. Big tears were trickling down her cheeks.

Mademoiselle de Cazalis and Abbé Chastanier returned at once to Marseilles. Fine and Marius hastened to the gaol. They told Revertégat that they had four months to prepare the escape, and the gaoler swore he would abide by his word, on whatever day and hour they might remind him of it.

The two young people desired to see Philippe before leaving Aix, so as to let him know what had taken place and tell him to have hope. At eleven o'clock in the evening Revertégat conducted them again to the cell.

Philippe, who was becoming accustomed to the prison regulations, did not seem particularly depressed.

"Provided I am spared the disgrace of the public exhibition," he said to them, "I will consent to everything. I would rather break my head open against a wall, than be fastened to the post of infamy."

And the following day the diligence brought Marius and Fine back to Marseilles. They were about to continue the struggle to which their hearts urged them, on a much larger scale than before; they were about to dive to the bottom of human misery and behold the bare wounds of a great city abandoned to all the passions of modern industry.

Part II.

CHAPTER I.

M. SAUVAIRE, THE MASTER STEVEDORE.

CADET COUGOURDAN'S employer, the master stevedore Sauvaire, was a short, lively, dark man with thickset powerful limbs. His great hooked nose, thin lips and elongated visage, were expressive of that vain-glorious confidence and artful bragging which are the distinctive features of certain types in the south of France.

Brought up in the port, a simple labourer in his youth, he had saved up his earnings for ten years. He raised enormous weights and was possessed of vigorous strength that did wonders. He was in the habit of saying he did not fear big men.

The truth was that this dwarf could have thrashed a giant. But he displayed prudence and wisdom in the use he made of his power, avoiding quarrels, knowing that the tension of his muscles was worth money, and that a blow with the fist only brings trouble. He lived soberly, given up entirely to work and avarice, impatient to attain the end he dreamed of.

At last he had before him the few thousand francs he required to accomplish his object. He became a master from one day to another, took men into his employ, and with folded arms watched them toiling and perspiring. From time to time he gave them a little help with a grumble.

Sauvaire, at the bottom, was a downright lazy fellow; he had worked out of obstinacy, preferring to perform his life's task at one go-off and rest later on in the comfortable

indolence of a wealthy man. Now that he had poor wretches to win him a fortune, he walked about with his hands in his pockets, piling up money, waiting until he had amassed a large sum to satisfy his instincts of free and noisy life.

Little by little the avaricious workman became transformed into a wealthy prodigal. Sauvaire was possessed of a tremendous appetite for wealth and pleasure: he wished to have plenty of money in order to enjoy himself beyond measure, and he desired to do that, so as to show he had plenty of money. He was urged on by the vanity of a parvenu to make his pleasures fiendishly riotous. When he laughed he insisted on all Marseilles hearing his peal of merriment.

He now wore clothes fashioned out of fine cloth, under which it was easy to distinguish the stiff limbs of the former workman. A heavy gold chain was spread out across his waistcoat, it was as thick as one's finger and from it hung a bunch of massive charms which seemed almost sufficient to stun an ox. On the left hand he wore a gold ring without any stone. With patent leather shoes on his feet and a soft felt hat on his head he sauntered up and down the Cannebière and round about the Port all day, smoking a magnificent meerschaum pipe mounted in silver; and, as he walked along he made the charms dance on his stomach, while his eyes wandered over the crowd with a half-bantering, half-kindly expression. He was enjoying himself.

Sauvaire had, little by little, entrusted the management of his business to Cadet Cougourdan, whose smart manners pleased him: this youth of twenty summers was gifted with an upright and candid mind that gave him positive superiority over the other stevedores. The master was delighted at having such a workman at his elbow; he appointed him overseer of the men working for him, and from that moment was able to make a grand display in Marseilles of his natural desires. He limited his work to making up his accounts in the morning and pocketing the money that had been earned.

The existence he had been dreaming of commenced.

Sauvaire became a member of a club. He gambled, but prudently, being of opinion that the pleasure derived from the card-table is not worth what it costs; he wanted his money's worth of amusement and he therefore sought after substantial and lasting enjoyment. He dined at the best eating-houses, and associated with ladies whom he showed off in public. His vanity was deliciously tickled when he was able to lounge on the cushions of a carriage beside a huge silk skirt. The lady was nothing, the silk gown all. He dragged it into private dining-rooms and there threw the windows open, so that all the passers-by might see that he was having a rare time with a well-dressed lady, and ordering expensive dishes. Others would have closed the shutters and bolted the door; his dream was to kiss his fair companions in a glass house, so that the multitude might know that he was wealthy enough to love such pretty creatures. He had his own idea of love.

For a month he had been living in rapture. He had met a young woman whose acquaintance tickled his self-esteem. This young person was protected by a Count and was looked upon as one of the Queens of the demimonde at Marseilles. She called herself Thérèse-Armande but was better known by the familiar name of Armande.

When Armande placed her little gloved hand in Sauvaire's huge paw for the first time, the master-stevedore almost fainted with delight. This pressure of the hand was exchanged in the Allées de Meilhan, opposite the door of the house where the lorette resided, and the passers-by stopped and turned round, at the sight of this man and young woman smiling and bowing to each other. Sauvaire went off bursting with pride, and in ecstasies about Armande's dress and superior manners. He had but one thought: that of protecting this person himself, supplanting the Count and walking about with lace and velvet leaning on his arm.

He watched for Armande and placed himself in her path. He fell in love with the luxuriant finery she wore, and the perfumery that escaped from her clothes. He was proud at getting a bow from her, at appearing to be one of her friends, and it would certainly not have displeased him to have been thought one of her lovers.

At length she succumbed. He thought it a victory due to the charms of his person. For a week his conceit was unbearable. He went about casting a look of mocking pity on the people he met in the street. When Armande was leaning on his arm the pavement seemed too small for him. The gentle swaying to and fro in the lady's gait, the frou-frou of her skirts threw him into a delicious reverie. He was very fond of crinolines which take up a great deal of room and interfere with pedestrian traffic.

He related his good fortune to everyone. Cadet was one of his first confidants.

"Ah! If you only knew!" he said to him, "the charming person, and how she adores me! She has everything imaginable at her place, carpets, curtains, glasses. You would think yourself in high society, 'pon my word! And with all that, not in the least proud, a good-natured girl with her hand always open. Yesterday I lunched in her small drawing-room, and we then took an open carriage and drove to the Prado. Everyone was staring at us. It is enough to make you die of joy to be in such a woman's society."

Cadet smiled. His dream was to be loved by a robust girl, and in his eyes Armande had all the appearance of a mechanical doll, of a brittle toy, which he would have broken between his fingers. But he did not wish to annoy his employer, and so he went into ecstasies with him over the lorette's charms. In the evening he gave Fine an account of Sauvaire's follies.

The flower-girl had resumed her place in her little kiosk on the Cours St. Louis. While selling her flowers, she kept her eyes on the alert, in search of opportunities to come to Marius' assistance. She had not lost sight of the loan of fifteen thousand francs and each day she built up a new plan dreaming of taxing those whom chance brought near her.

"Do you think," she inquired one morning of her brother, "that M. Sauvaire is a man to lend money?"

"That's according to circumstances," answered Cadet. "He would willingly give a thousand francs to a poor devil on a public square, before a crowd of people, to make an exhibition of kind heartedness."

The flower-girl laughed.

"Oh! It's not charity that is wanted," she answered. "The lender's left hand must ignore what is done by his right."

"The deuce!" said Cadet. "That is too disinterested. However, one can see."

On the basis of these few words of conversation Fine elaborated quite a scheme. She believed Sauvaire was very wealthy, and she did not take him for an ill-natured man at heart. It would, perhaps, be possible to get something out of him by making use of Armande's influence.

The flower-girl understood that she must first of all persuade Marius to call on the lorette. That was the difficult part of the business. The young man would firmly refuse, would say that there could be nothing in common between him and this woman.

One day she let Armande's name escape her as if by accident, and was very much surprised to see Marius smile and appear to know all about her.

"Are you acquainted with the lady?" she inquired.

"I went to see her once," he answered. "It was Philippe who took me there. This lady, as you term her, threw open her reception-rooms to her friends once a week, and my brother was one of the frequenters of the place. Faith, I was very well received and found a charming hostess there, who was exceedingly ladylike and very elegant."

Fine seemed quite sad to hear Marius sing Armande's praises.

"It appears," he continued, "that things have somewhat changed at her place during the past year. They tell me her affairs are very much involved. However, they say she is extremely clever, and has a talent for intrigue; if she should happen to come across a simpleton she will easily get out of her difficulties."

The young girl had recovered from the strange emotion that had got the better of her. She adroitly continued to put her plan into execution without undue haste.

"The simpleton is found," she said, laughing. "Don't you know M. Sauvaire, Cadet's principal?"

"Slightly," answered Marius, "I have sometimes met him walking about the old port in slippers."

"Well, he has been Armande's lover for the last few months, and they pretend he has already spent some money with her."

Then Fine added in an indifferent tone of voice:

"Why don't you go and see Armande again? You would meet wealthy people there who might assist you in the affair in question. M. Sauvaire would perhaps be disposed to help you."

Marius became serious and for a moment was silent. He was thinking.

"Pooh!" he exclaimed at last, "I must not flinch at anything. I shall have to call and see that person to-morrow. I will explain my visit by speaking of my brother."

The flower-girl looked the young man in the face with quivering eyelids.

"And above all," she continued, with a forced laugh, "don't go and remain at the feet of the enchantress. I have often heard tell of her costly and clever style of dress, of her wit, and the strange power she exercises over men."

Marius, who was astonished at his friend's unsteady voice, took her hand and examined her with his penetrating eyes.

"What is the matter with you?" he inquired. "Anyone would think I was going to see the devil, and that I am a sinner. Ah! my dear Fine, I am far from thinking of such nonsense. I have a solemn task to perform. Besides, look at me well. What woman would care for such a baboon?"

The young girl gazed at him, and was quite surprised to find him no longer ugly. Formerly he had seemed frightful; now she perceived something like light burst from his countenance and transform his features. The young man pressed her hand amicably and she remained quite troubled.

The following evening Marius called on Armande in accordance with his determination.

CHAPTER II.

A MARSEILLAISE LORETTE.

ARMANDE'S origin was shrouded in mystery. She pretended she was born in India of a native woman and an English officer. She started from that point and related a novel of which she was the heroine, to anyone who would listen to it.

She made a wealthy protector who had taken care of her at her father's death, responsible for her first fault. He had brought her up in the greatest refinement on the same principle as that of fattening a fowl in order that it may make a more toothsome dish. She delighted in relating this brutally romantic tale.

Thanks to her falsehoods her real history was never known. She had one day swooped down on Marseilles, just like those birds that scent a district rich in all kinds of prey, from afar. In settling in a commercial centre, she displayed extraordinary intelligence.

From the moment of her arrival she directed her batteries against business men, young merchants who shovel money about. She understood that these young sparks, confined all day in their offices, were thirsting for amusement at night, and anxious to squander some of the cash they have earned.

She set her snares with art. She began by starting her establishment on an important footing, and giving it a sort of aristocratic appearance. It was easy for her to vanquish the rivals whom she found already settled in the city. Those poor fallen daughters of Eve were grossly ignorant; they dressed badly, hardly knew how to speak, made a wretched, mean show of luxury, and gave themselves stupidly away. Armande crushed them with her elegance and the wit she had picked up here and there in her intercourse with persons in good station of life. In a few months she became a sort of mundane celebrity.

At home, as Sauvaire had naïvely said, she gave herself the airs of a duchess. She had displayed admirable taste in furnishing her apartment.

She threw open her drawing-room, and while she attracted the golden youth of the city by her noisy mode of life, she retained them by her good graces and air of distinction. You could hardly perceive, through the mistress of the house, the lady of easy virtue. She had lovers and was willing enough to show them off; but, in public and at her evening parties, she maintained a decency of demeanour for which they felt very grateful to her. She was the emblem of vice—witty, elegant, and perfumed.

Little by little she surrounded herself by most of the fast men of the city, but she was careful only to receive wealthy people, such as earned a great deal of money and spent still more. At the commencement she had only to choose her victims, a swarm being at her feet. She devoured several fortunes with her sharp teeth, living in the utmost luxury, and providing for all the requirements of her mode of life, which were enormous.

Moral people looked on her as a regular pest, as a bottomless pit in which the capital of the young commercial men of Marseilles was being engulfed. Her rivals tore her to bits and accused her of engaging in shameless intrigues; they made fun of her thin face, of the wrinkles come before their time, said she was ugly, which was almost true, and vowed they could not understand the infatuation of those idiotic men for the creature. Armande let them talk and quietly reigned. For several years she had domineered over them by her mind, luxury and the science of an elegant and refined woman. Men attended her receptions in dress coats and white neckties.

Then, without any apparent cause, her credit was all at once lost. Bad fortune came, and made holes in her luxuriant existence. No doubt she had gone out of fashion and generous protectors were scarce. She descended to that semi-state of poverty which is attired in silk and treads on carpets. Feeling she would roll into the gutter if she did not make an effort to retain her grand apartment, she struggled in desperation against her ill-luck. She understood that her power of fascination came solely from her apparent wealth, from her style of dress, from the money which permitted her to act the part of a duchess

beyond her sphere, at her ease. She knew that as soon as she was out of silk and had closed her drawing-room, she would become a poor girl, an ugly, faded creature whom no one would have anything to do with, and she displayed feverish energy to find protectors and procure money at any cost.

It was at this time that she made the acquaintance of a Madame Mercier, who advanced her money at an exorbitant rate of interest. She had taken in so many young simpletons, that she allowed herself to be imposed upon in her turn without much ado. She hoped, however, to make the first wealthy individual whom she came across, pay the capital and interest of the money she had borrowed. But men of wealth did not put in an appearance and she became more and more anxious.

Urged on by necessity and feeling that her beauty, which was her bread-winner, was leaving her day by day with her luxury, she turned to crime. She had already been obliged to sell looking-glasses, furniture, porcelain, to satisfy the demands of her creditors; her apartment was becoming stripped of everything; she saw the walls getting bare, little by little, and thought, with a shudder, of the day when she would find herself weary and old in an empty room. The upholsterers, milliners, all the tradesmen to whom she owed money, became more troublesome as they detected their customer's approaching ruin: they knew that protectors were becoming rare, and insisted on the immediate payment of their claims. Some of them talked of putting in the brokers. Armande therefore understood that she was lost unless she found money at once—no matter how.

She had recourse to an extreme measure. She imitated the writing of three or four of her lovers, and made out acceptances in her own favour which she signed with these person's names. Then, not daring to go to a banker, she applied to Madame Mercier, who consented to discount several of the bills.

It is probable that this female usurer was not ignorant of their origin and that she even speculated on it. Holding the young woman in her clutches, able at any moment to

lodge a complaint with the crown-attorney, relying, moreover, on those whose names were on the bills, and whose interest it was to avoid a scandal, she considered the forgeries she held in guarantee, as preferable to genuine bills. She based quite a fortune on her complacency, exacting enormous interest, embroiling the lorette's affairs more and more, making her provide for her completely, acting a cunning and hypocritical part which she performed to perfection.

Armande managed to get along for two years without being disturbed. She had made the bills payable at her residence, and provided the money for them when they fell due at any cost, taking a hundred francs from the first man she met, completing the amount by selling something, borrowing again and forging fresh bills. Madame Mercier continued to be humble and obliging; she desired to hold her prey in a close grip before showing her teeth and biting.

Then the time came when Armande was positively unable to meet the forged acceptances. She cast herself into the gutter in vain. She went to the Chateau-des-Fleurs and still could not make the money she required to keep up her house.

It was just then that she made Sauvaire's acquaintance. For him she dismissed a Count she had ruined, under the impression that the master stevedore was rich and generous. In other times when she was Queen of Marseilles and insolently displayed her lace and velvet, she would have gazed down on Sauvaire from the height of the wealth and elegance of her admirers. But now there was no prey that she disdained; she set her batteries against the crowd and would willingly have received money from soiled hands. The former workman mistook the dire necessity which thrust the young woman into his arms, for tenderness. After a few months she perceived with alarm, that her new acquaintance had all the prudent, economical habits of an upstart and that he spent all his money on himself like an egotist. Two or three of the forged acceptances were not met and Madame Mercier began to get angry.

Things were at that point when one evening Marius

naïvely called. He expected to meet some of the numerous wealthy company in her drawing-room to whom his brother had introduced him. He had a vague idea of getting intimate with some young business-man who would come to his assistance; and he relied in a measure on Sauvaire, whose obliging disposition Fine had been careful to exaggerate.

He was very much astonished to find the drawing-room empty. The large apartment was lit with a single lamp and appeared particularly bare. Sauvaire was reclining on a large divan and seemed to be making a great fuss about digesting the dinner he had just eaten, undoing some of the buttons of his waistcoat, and holding a tooth-pick between his fingers.

Armande was seated beside him in an arm-chair, reading *Graziella*, with her forehead resting dreamily on the palm of her left hand. An Italian greyhound named Djali was lying at her feet, with its head reposing on her cherry-coloured slippers.

One of Armande's ways of seduction was to read the works of great modern poets before her admirers. She had a small bookcase containing the writings of Châteaubriand, Victor Hugo, de Lamartine and Alfred de Musset.

In the evening, in the pale light of the lamp, at an hour when she was still beautiful, she languidly spelt over pages of verse or poetical prose. This placed a sort of halo round her head. Her admirers thought they had an ignorant girl to deal with, and they found an educated, almost a lettered, lady, who read books that they had never had either the time or energy to look into.

Sauvaire, especially, felt crushed and overshadowed on the day when his lady friend took up a book of verses, and quietly began turning over the pages of it before him. It was a rare event with him when he glanced through a newspaper. A woman opening a volume of poetry was in his eyes a superior creature. Each time Armande read in his presence he collected himself and looked affected and charmed. It seemed to him that he was becoming wise himself.

Marius slightly smiled when he saw Armande in an inclined attitude feigning ecstasy, and the position Sauvaire

was in, lounging on the divan with his hands clasped across his stomach.

The lorette welcomed the new-comer with her easy, sprightly grace. She had been more or less intimately connected with Philippe, and she treated Marius as an old acquaintance. She asked him to be seated, and reproached him with the rarity of his visits.

"I know very well," she added, "that you have had a great deal of trouble lately. Poor Philippe! I can fancy sometimes that I see him in his damp prison, he who was so fond of luxury and pleasure! That will teach him to place his affection in better hands."

Sauvaire had raised himself a little. One of his good qualities was that he was not jealous; on the contrary he showed himself quite proud of his companion's pest admirers. The fondness which Armande had formerly shown for others doubled, in his eyes, the value of his good fortune. Besides, Marius seemed to him so small that he was delighted to appear robust beside of him.

The young woman introduced the two men.

"Oh! We know each other," said the master stevedore, with the laugh of a happy man. "I also know M. Philippe Cayol. There's a fine fellow for you!"

The truth was that Sauvaire was delighted at being found alone with Armande. He began to talk to her familiarly, to lay stress on the pleasures they participated in together, and then resumed speaking of Philippe:

"He often came to see you, didn't he? Ah! never mind, don't protest. I think you were in love with each other. I used to meet him sometimes at the Château-des-Fleurs. We went there yesterday. Eh! my dear, what a crowd, what dresses!"

He turned to Marius.

"In the evening," he added, "we supped at a restaurant. It is very expensive. It is not everyone who can afford that."

Armande seemed to suffer. There was still some delicacy about the woman. She looked at Marius, shrugged her shoulders slightly, shot glances at him, scoffing at Sauvaire. The latter remained imperturbable and stretched himself out full of enjoyment.

Marius then guessed how much the lorette was embarrassed and tormented. He felt something like pity at the sight of her deserted drawing-room, and when he understood down what a frightfully steep incline this woman, whom he had known happy and without a care, was rolling, he regretted having called.

About ten o'clock he found himself alone with Sauvaire, who began to give him an account of his good fortune and joyous existence.

A servant had come to tell Armande that Madame Mercier was in the ante-chamber and that she seemed very angry.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH MADAME MERCIER SHOWS HER CLAWS.

MADAME MERCIER was a little round, fat old woman of fifty, who was for ever tearfully complaining about the hardness of the times. Attired in a gown of washed-out printed calico, always with an old straw basket on her arm which served as a safe, she trotted along with short steps and the sly movements of a cat. She was humble and wretched and gave herself poverty-stricken airs to make people pity her. Her fresh complexion, and the wrinkles on her face, resembling rolls of fat, were a standing protest against the tears that inundated it at every moment.

This female usurer played her part admirably with Armande. She first of all acted the good-natured woman. She gained absolute control over her with an infernal kind of art, showing herself in turn serviceable and egotistic, embroiling the accounts, allowing the interest to accumulate, making it impossible for her debtor to verify anything.

Thus, when one of the acceptances fell due and Armande was without funds to meet it, Madame Mercier was greatly distressed, then she promised to borrow the money from someone, vowing she had not got it herself. She advanced the amount of the bill, but made the lorette immediately reimburse her, and thus there was fresh interest to pay.

In all this coming and going of acceptances, in the constant increase in the rate of discount, Armande had lost all count of how she stood, what she had paid and what she still owed. In the meantime the debt increased without the usurer making any farther advances, and the older it became the more obscure it got. The young woman felt herself lost at the bottom of chaos.

The female usurer maintained her despairing and coaxing manner. When she supplied money herself in order that Armande might pay her, she made her feel all her devotedness, all the heroism of her conduct.

"Eh? You have never seen a creditor like me," she would say. "I even go so far as to borrow the money you want. That is splendid, that is!"

"But," answered Armande, "it's for yourself that you borrow the money, as I give it you."

"Not at all," answered the old woman, "I am only seeking to do you a service."

So Madame Mercier in this way introduced herself little by little into the house. Every two or three days, she came and showed her cunning, coaxing face. Armande became her property, her slave. Sometimes she arrived all in a flutter, fell into a chair in despair and accused the young woman of wanting to run away without paying her; it was necessary to take her over the apartment and let her see that the trunks were not packed up. Sometimes she rang violently at the door, said she had been robbed, and reproached the lorette with her expenditure; she compared the one life with the other, accused her debtor of being insolvent, and crippled with debt, and ended by asking for fresh security.

At other moments she came suddenly and demanded money; then she softened down, pleaded poverty, and on leaving shuffled along in a most lamentable way. She accompanied each of these visits with a deluge of tears. These came at her bidding, and she took advantage of that circumstance to embarrass people.

Each complaint was followed by a sob, she twisted herself about pitifully on a chair, uttering the least word in a doleful tone of voice.

Armande, weary and bewildered, generally stood before her without being able to pronounce a syllable. At times she would have sacrificed everything: linen, gowns, furniture, to have been freed from these continual lamentations.

The usurer invented another kind of persecution. She would come with red eyes, declare she was in want of bread, and was dying. The young woman, aggravated and quite out of patience, would tell her to sit down and eat. Sometimes she would shed streams of tears to get sugar, coffee, or brandy.

"Alas! My dear lady," she snivelled, "I am very unhappy. This morning I had to take my coffee without sugar, and to-morrow I shall have neither sugar nor coffee. Be charitable. It is you who have brought me to this; if you were to give me my money, I should not be obliged to come and beg. For pity's sake let me have a few pounds of coffee and sugar. That will count for all the services I have rendered you."

Armande did not dare refuse. She spent her last few sous trembling in the presence of certain savage, bantering looks of her creditor. If she happened to say she had no money the usurer would answer,

"Very well, I shall present the bill you gave me to your lover——"

The other would not allow her to proceed any further. She sent and sold something and purchased what her tormentor required. The unfortunate girl closed her eyes in order not to see the chasm gaping before her.

She belonged to this woman who held such terrible proofs against her in her hands, and she obeyed her, inwardly irritated, inquiring of herself with despair, by what means she could escape from her claws.

Madame Mercier wept for nearly two years and extracted from Armande all she could. She never went away with empty hands.

The money she had lent her already brought her in two hundred and fifty per cent. If the capital was compromised, the interest covered it two or three times over. At last the usurer understood that she must change her tactics. Armande could not receive her without a nervous

shudder which must inevitably bring about a crisis, Besides, she had no money and she had twice firmly refused to give her sugar.

From that moment the old woman resolved to weep no more, but to have recourse to strong measures. It only remained to her to play all for all, to exact immediate payment of the arrears, from the lorette, by threatening to lodge a complaint with the crown attorney.

She had had the prudence not to manifest the least suspicion anent the forged bills in her possession. Her plan was soon formed. She decided she would call on the young woman and put her in a fearful fright. If one of her protectors happened to be there, she would apply to him, she would create a scandal and manage to get back her money somehow. She wanted to devour her prey after having sucked all the blood from her veins.

An acceptance for a thousand francs which Armande had signed with Sauvaire's name, and which she had given Madame Mercier in exchange for another bill, had fallen due on the previous day. The old woman having a pretext to be angry resolved not to wait any longer. She called on the young woman just at the time when Marius and the master stevedore were there.

Armande was quite troubled when she met her in the ante-chamber. She dragged her to the farthest corner of a small boudoir which was only separated from the drawing-room by a thin door. She offered her a seat with the timid and beseeching look of an insolvent person to her creditor.

"What do you mean," shouted the usurer, refusing the chair, "you are making fun of me, my good lady! Another bill returned unpaid! I am tired of it all."

She had crossed her arms and spoke in a loud insolent voice. Her little fat, red face shone with anger. Armande would have preferred to have seen her crying and lamenting in her customary drawling tone of voice.

"For mercy's sake," she exclaimed frightened, "speak lower. I have visitors. You know in what an embarrassed position I find myself. Grant me a few days' grace."

Madame Mercier made a movement of impatience. She stood on tip-toe and spoke right in the lorette's face.

"What care I, if you have visitors?" she continued, without lowering her voice. "I mean to be paid, and immediately! Madame wears hats and bonnets, Madame goes to the Château-des-Fleurs, Madame has lovers who provide all sorts of amusement for her! Have I any lovers? I deprive myself, I eat dry bread and drink water, whereas you stuff yourself with good things. That can't last, I must have my money, or I will take you somewhere. You know where, don't you?"

She accompanied these words with a threatening look and Armande turned quite pale.

"Ah! That ruffles you," continued the old woman, sneering. "You must have taken me for a donkey! If I have acted like one, it was no doubt because it was to my interest to do so.

She began laughing and shrugging her shoulders. Then she added violently:

"If you don't pay me to-night, I will write to-morrow to the crown attorney."

"I don't know what you mean," stammered Armande.

The old woman sat down. She felt she was mistress of the situation, and she wanted to enjoy the pleasure of playing for a moment with her prey.

"Ah! You don't know what I mean, when I speak to you of the crown attorney," she said, making a frightful grimace as if overcome with sudden merriment. "But you lie, my good lady! Look at yourself in that glass: you are pallid, own that you're a hussy."

At that word Armande rose. It seemed to her that she had just received a cut with a whip across the face. Her self-possession returned to her, and showing Madame Mercier the door, she exclaimed in a loud voice:

"Walk out at once!"

"No, I'll not go out," answered the old woman, sitting back in an arm-chair. "I want my money. If you touch me I'll shout murder, and the persons who are in your drawing-room will come to my assistance. I told you

I was not a fool. Pay me at once and I'll leave you alone.

"I have no money," answered Armande coldly.

This reply exasperated the old woman. For more than a year it had been given her regularly at each of her visits. She had ended by taking it for mockery.

"You have no money! You always say that," she exclaimed. "Give me your furniture and gowns. But no, I prefer sending you to prison. I will go and lodge a complaint, I will accuse you of forgery. We shall see, my beautiful lady, if you find lovers among your gaolers, who will treat you to silk gowns and tasty meals."

Armande staggered, losing all her assurance, fearing the cries of the old woman might be heard by Marius and Sauvaire. Her creditor saw her fright, and began shouting still louder.

"Yes," she said, "I can send you to the assizes to-morrow. You know that, don't you? I have over ten false acceptances in my possession on which you have imitated your lovers' signatures. That's nice work. I shall go and find each of these gentlemen; I will tell them what you are, and they will cast you into the street. You will die in the gutter."

She took breath, while the young woman, all of a tremble, thought of strangling her to make her silent.

"But that reminds me," she continued, "you have visitors. Perhaps in your drawing-room there is one of those gentlemen whose name you have stolen to make money out of. I'll go and see. It is necessary I should find out. Let me pass."

She moved towards the door. Armande placed herself in front of her, with extended arms, ready to strike her if she advanced.

"You want to strike me, I who have fed you, who have lent you my money," stammered the female usurer suffocating with rage.

And she stepped backward shouting:

"Help! Help!"

Armande faced sharply round to turn the key in the lock. But it was too late. The door had just

opened and she found herself face to face with Marius and Sauvaire, who were gazing into the boudoir in an anxious and curious manner.

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH SHOWS THAT THE POSITION OF A LORETTE
IS NOT WITHOUT ITS TROUBLES.

SAUVAIRE and Marius had been about half-an-hour alone in the drawing-room. The young man would willingly have withdrawn, but he considered it uncivil to do so without first of all taking leave of the mistress of the house. He therefore feigned to be listening to the stevedore's stories.

The sound of loud voices soon reached them. Little by little the noise increased to such a pitch that both of them lent the ear, being unable to appear discreet any longer.

Just then the shout: "Help! Help!" made them start up and open the door communicating with the boudoir.

A strange sight awaited them. As soon as they made their appearance Armande stepped back staggering, and let herself fall into an arm-chair. With her head between her hands she burst out sobbing, quite broken down, without raising her face or uttering a word.

The old woman, in a rage, with inflamed countenance, approached the two men and began speaking to them with passionate verbosity. From time to time she broke off to turn round and shake her fist at Armande, who was so upset by despair, which made her tremble all over her body, that she did not hear her.

"You saw it, did you not?" repeated the old woman. "She wanted to beat me. She had her arm in the air. Ah! the wretch! Just fancy, my good gentlemen, I have given that woman all my money. I like to be of service. Besides, I thought she was honest. She has made me discount acceptances signed by honourable persons; I thought I had good security. Now I learn that the bills

are false and that I have been shamefully robbed. What would you have done in my place? I reproached her with her abominable conduct and then she threatened to strike me."

Sauvaire opened his eyes in astonishment, gazing first of all at Armande's dejection and then at Madame Mercier's anger. He approached the young woman and exclaimed:

"Come, my dear, defend yourself. This woman lies, doesn't she? You have not done anything so stupid. Come, speak!"

Armande did not move, but continued sobbing.

"Oh! She'll not speak, she'll not defend herself," continued the woman usurer, in triumph. "She knows very well that I am in possession of the proofs. I shall write to-morrow morning to the crown attorney."

Marius, painfully surprised, cast a look of pity on Armande. Chance had brought him face to face with another shame, another human misery. He remembered the sad scene when Charles Blétry was arrested in his presence and a feeling of mercy overcame him in face of this woman whom vice had brought to infamy. He half-guessed the circumstances that had urged her on to crime, he understood how necessity, from fall to fall, had brought her to the gutter. He would have liked to have saved her, to have brought her back to a life of honesty, to have given her the means of extricating herself from the sewer.

"Why do you wish to ruin her?" he quietly inquired of the old woman. "You will not be paid any the quicker. Don't overwhelm her. On the contrary, give her a chance to recover herself and pay you back."

"No, no!" mercilessly answered the old woman, "I want her to go to prison. I have waited too long already. Yesterday, again, she failed to meet a bill of a thousand francs which she had made payable here. She signed that bill 'Sauvaire,' the name of one of her admirers, no doubt."

The master stevedore, on hearing himself referred to, started. The sum of a thousand alarmed him.

"You say you have an acceptance of a thousand francs

signed 'Sauvaire'?" he inquired, with an appearance of something very much like terror.

"Yes, sir," answered the old woman. "I brought it with me, it is in my basket."

"Show it me, if you please."

Sauvaire turned the bill over in his fingers, studying the handwriting very closely, and was confounded.

"By Jupiter," he exclaimed, "it's perfectly imitated!"

He leant over towards Armande, who was doubled up with grief, and continued in a dry tone of voice:

"Look here, my dear, no nonsense! I will never pay that, you know. The deuce! I'd willingly give you a hundred francs; but a thousand! It's too much."

He no longer spoke familiarly to her, he even began to regret his excursion into the demi-monde of Marseilles.

"Oh! That's not the only one I've got," continued Madame Mercier; "I've many others in my possession bearing different names. However, if this one were paid, I would agree not to say anything. I would continue to wait."

Marius' sensible remarks had made her understand that it would be better not to lodge a complaint, and as she had Sauvaire beside her she was in hopes he would pay. She became quite tender, changed her plans and began to excuse Armande.

"After all," she said, "I don't know that the other bills are false. The poor little woman has had a rough time. You must not be angry with her, sir. She is a very good person at heart." And she began to shed warm tears.

Marius could not restrain a smile. Sauvaire walked up and down, excited, grumbling angrily. He cared very little about Armande's infamous conduct, he was simply irritated at the struggle between egotism and generosity that was taking place within him.

"No, decidedly!" he exclaimed at last, "I can do nothing."

Armande, buried in her arm-chair, continued sobbing in a low, broken-hearted manner. This woman who had known all the delight of luxury and adoration, suffered

bitterly at having fallen so low. There she was, degraded, with her misery and shame brought home to her, and she was seized with despair when her thoughts went back to her elegance and wealth of former times. She would never rise again; she would fall still lower, become the last of creatures. And she was all the more upset at the thought that her disgrace would be public. The presence of Sauvaire and Marius gave her additional pain.

Her silent grief produced a strange effect on Marius, who was weak in the presence of tears. He would willingly have given the old woman her thousand francs if he had had them. After a painful silence he addressed Sauvaire who was taking great strides about the room, very much annoyed.

"Come, sir," he said to him, "this woman must be saved. Her own sobs plead her cause better than I could do. You are fond of her and will not abandon her in her despair."

"Eh! Yes, I was fond of her," answered the master stevedore sharply, "and I think I have shown it sufficiently, during the last three months. Do you know that I have already spent nearly five thousand francs with her. I'll give no more. So much the worse! She must get out of it as she can. It would be a thousand francs thrown into the street. What enjoyment shall I have for this money if I give it her?"

"You will have done a good action. Her behaviour is scandalous, and I am not trying to excuse her; only, I think I can guess how it was she became a forger, and I could plead her cause."

"Oh! all that has nothing to do with me. She did what she pleased. You see I am not angry. I am simply going to place myself beyond all this disagreeable business."

Marius was getting discouraged, he remembered what Fine had related to him about the master-stevedore's vanity, and he continued in a careless way:

"Let's say no more about it. I spoke to you thus because I knew you were very rich and very generous. Sooner or later the account of your good action would

have been mooted abroad, and you would have won, in this affair, more than a thousand francs worth of praise."

"Do you think so?" asked Sauvaire hesitating.

"I am certain. Few men would be so generous, and for that reason it would be positively glorious to save this woman. But let us say no more about it."

Sauvaire ceased walking about. He stopped in the centre of the room and began to think.

Madame Mercier, who saw him hesitating, and who was experiencing thrills of desire, at the idea of receiving a thousand francs, thought she had better intervene. She had resumed her tearful voice and her humble, gentle manner:

"Ah! sir," she said to Sauvaire, "if you only knew how this poor little woman adores you! There are very wealthy men who have tried to take your place. She has refused all offers, and it is perhaps that which has placed her in straitened circumstances and prevented her repairing the faults she has committed. You cannot imagine how closely she clings to you."

The master stevedore felt very much flattered at these remarks. From the moment his self-esteem was in question the matter bore a different complexion.

"Very well! Be it so," he said, "I'll give the thousand francs. I'll take them to you to-morrow evening. Now withdraw. Leave madame alone."

The old woman bowed with servile humility and went quietly away, closing the doors without the least noise.

Armande had raised her head. Her face flushed with tears seemed to have grown older. All upset with fright and feverish with shame, she rose with difficulty and wanted to kneel down before Marius and Sauvaire.

The young man held her up whilst the master stevedore said:

"Come! my dear, it's all over. I accept your thanks, and trust my good action will be profitable to you."

The truth was that Sauvaire no longer found any charm in Armande. He had just perceived that the poor creature was faded, and he had received too hard a lesson to forget himself any longer in the boudoirs of the demi-monde. He began to prefer the grisette.

The two men withdrew, and at the door Armande warmly kissed Marius' hand. She saw that he felt real and profound pity for her, and she thanked him for having saved her.

The following night Sauvaire called to fetch Marius to accompany him to Madame Mercier's. The female usurer occupied a filthy house in the Rue du Pavé d'Amour. The two visitors ascended three flights of stairs and knocked, without obtaining an answer, at a blackened, damp door. The noise they made brought out a neighbour who informed them that the "wicked old woman" had been arrested that morning.

"The police," said this person, "had been on her track for some days. It seems a complaint had been lodged against her. All the tenants were delighted at her arrest. She only just had time to burn the papers likely to compromise her."

Marius understood that Armande had been saved by Providence. He made inquiries of the people at the house and acquired the certitude that the old woman had burnt all the acceptances signed by the lorette, fearing that their possession might constitute other charges against her; for she guessed that if Armande found herself implicated, she would tell the truth and give the most overwhelming details. Besides, by destroying the securities she lost nothing, as she had long since recovered her advances.

Sauvaire was particularly delighted at their adventure. He carried off the thousand francs triumphantly. He had been enabled to give a proof of his generosity without spending a sou. It was all profit.

"You are a witness that I was going to give the money," he said to Marius. "That is how I am. I like to be generous, I throw money out of the window. Oh! a gift of a thousand francs does not trouble me, when it's a question of paying for my amusement."

Marius allowed him to expatiate on his good qualities, and ran off to Armande to tell her the good news.

He found the young woman sad and troubled. She had passed an atrocious night, struggling mentally with her

misfortunes, in search of a supreme means of extricating herself from the infamy in which she was plunged.

When she learned that the forged acceptances had been destroyed, that she had recovered her liberty, she was as if transformed. She kissed Marius passionately, and vowed to him that she would take advantage of the lesson and change her mode of life.

"I will work," she said, "I will conduct myself like a respectable woman. Then only will I ask you to return me your friendship. Good-bye!"

Marius left her, quite moved by her decision and promises. When he was alone he reproached himself with his abnegation: for two days he had been living beyond himself, without giving a thought to his brother's safety.

When Fine inquired the result of his errand, he did not dare relate to her the dramatic scenes at which he had been present; he limited himself to telling her that there was no hope of borrowing the money from Sauvaire, and that Armande was closing her drawing-room.

"Where will you go now, then?" inquired the flower-girl.

"I know not," he answered, "However, I have a plan which I am going to put into execution."

CHAPTER V.

DOUGLAS, THE NOTARY.

MARIUS had returned to M. Martelly's and resumed his duties, finding a sort of peacefulness in his work. His thoughts ran freer amidst the silence and calm of his office. He told himself that he had four months in which to come to Philippe's assistance, and he would reflect for hours together as to the best means to be employed.

M. Martelly continued to treat him as he would a son.

Sometimes the young man thought of telling him everything and of borrowing the fifteen thousand francs of him. But a fear, a timidity prevented him; he dreaded his employer's republican sternness. So he resolved to continue

the struggle, to exhaust all possible means before applying to the shipowner. Later on, when he had unsuccessfully tried everything else, he would make up his mind to tell him of his difficulty and implore his kind assistance.

Meanwhile, he determined he would not again behave like a simpleton and take any useless step. For a moment, he thought of earning the necessary amount himself. The high figure frightened him, and he saw very well that he could never put by such a sum in four months. Yet he felt bold enough to move mountains.

It recurred to him that Douglas, the notary whose aid M. Martelly had vainly asked for Philippe, had for some months past been offering to employ him as agent, acting under power of attorney for some of his clients. The notary and the ship-owner were connected in various business matters, and M. Martelly often sent Marius to settle different accounts with Douglas. One day, on calling there, the young man decided to accept the offer that had been made him: if the profits were small, he might, when he had become better known, succeed in obtaining a loan.

The notary lived in a house of simple and austere appearance. The offices occupied the entire first floor; there was quite a crowd of clerks seated along stained deal tables, in the large cold bare rooms. Luxury had never penetrated into those rooms full of prodigious activity and a kind of honest roughness. One felt oneself to be in the abode of a man who never forgot himself amid the joys of life.

About ten years before, Douglas had succeeded to the practice of a person named Imbert, whose clerk he had been for more than twelve years. He was then an intelligent and active young fellow, with a passion for business, and ever dreaming of monster speculations. The fever for trade and manufacture that was passing over France heated his blood and filled him with strong ambition; he wished to earn vast sums of money, not in order to live in opulence, but because he tasted a keen voluptuousness in unravelling all monetary matters, and in guiding the undertakings he embarked upon to success. At the

outset he felt himself too restricted in his notary's practice. He was a born banker, and his hands were formed for manipulating large sums of money. His profession, with its quiet dealings and almost sacred and paternal character, did not in the least suit his stock-jobbing nature. He felt out of his element, for all his instincts urged him to turn the money deposited with him to account. He could not reconcile himself to being a disinterested intermediary, and he launched into panting and feverish speculations, which later on turned him into a great criminal.

He paid the purchase money of his practice in a few months, without anyone knowing how he had obtained the necessary capital. Then he displayed febrile activity. In a very short time his practice developed considerably. He became the first notary of Marseilles, opening his doors wide and securing fresh clients every day. His mode of proceeding was extremely simple: he never denied himself to any client, and listened to every application; he always found money for those who wanted to borrow, and always had excellent investments for those who deposited their cash with him. A considerable turnover of capital thus took place through the intermediary of his office.

At first, people were surprised at his rapid success. They talked of imprudence, and considered that the young notary was going too quickly ahead, and was undertaking a burden too heavy for his shoulders. Besides this, no one could make out how he managed to meet the calls occasioned by the continual increase of his practice. But Douglas calmed public anxiety by the simplicity of his life. He was believed to be very wealthy, yet he dressed quietly, displayed not the slightest luxury, and denied himself all pleasures. Everyone knew that he led a sober existence, eating only plain food, living, in fact, like a petty shop-keeper. He was also very pious, gave a great deal in charity, went to church and remained kneeling during the whole length of the service. By these means he acquired the reputation of an honest man, and this went on increasing daily. He came to be cited at last as a model of piety and honour. His name was respected and beloved.

It had taken him barely six years to arrive at this position; and now, during six years he had been at the head of the Marseilles' notaries: his office was the most frequented, and the one that did the most business. Wealthy people made a point of employing this modest and pious man endowed with every virtue. The nobility and clergy supported him; the commercial world had ended by feeling unlimited confidence in his loyalty. The position was won, and Douglas was feverishly turning it to account.

He was then about forty-five years old, a strong, thick-set man, inclined to stoutness. His face, always clean-shaven, was deathly pale; the flesh seemed inanimate, the eyes alone showing signs of life. He looked like a verger turned banker. Beneath his gentle exterior, one could hear a kind of muffled roar: no doubt the blood was coursing fiercely in this struggler's body which seemed asleep. When he conversed in his drawling tones, his voice occasionally rose to a pitch which revealed the internal fever consuming him. He was always to be found in his private room, a cold apartment, poorly furnished. There was generally a priest or a nun in the ante-chamber. The door was left open and it was easy for anyone to find the chief. He displayed his charity, contempt for luxury, and austere good-nature even rather too complacently.

Marius felt a real sympathy for this man whose simple virtues quite won his heart. He delighted in calling upon him. On this particular day, after discussing with Douglas the business upon which M. Martelly had sent him, the young man added, hesitatingly:

"I wish now, sir, to speak to you on a private matter, only, I am afraid I may be trespassing on your time."

"Not at all! my dear friend," said the notary cordially, "I am quite at your service. I have already offered you my assistance, and my house is open to you."

"I remember your kind offers, and I wish to remind you of what you said to me some months ago."

"I told you that it only rested with yourself to earn some money with me. I should like to assist a young

fellow like you by putting your willingness and courage to the proof. What I told you then I repeat to-day."

"I thank you and accept," replied Marius simply, much affected by Douglas' frank and generous ways. The latter, on hearing the young man's words, started with joy. He turned his chair round quickly and indicated another seat to his visitor.

"Sit down and let us talk," he said. "I can only give you a few minutes. I like young men such as you; not afraid of work and speaking their minds freely. You do not know how happy you make me by placing me in the position to be useful to you." He smiled, and every word he uttered was like a caress. "Well, this is the matter in question," he continued. "As some of my clients do not reside at Marseilles, I have had to find a means of facilitating their transactions. I have therefore obtained several agents acting under power of attorney to represent the absent parties and who look after these persons' properties. Whenever one of my clients is, for some reason or other, unable to attend personally to his affairs, he leaves with me a blank power of attorney, depending on me to find some upright party who will faithfully fulfil his duties. I know that you are an active and honest fellow, and I offer you the position of representing two or three landlords whose powers of attorney I have by me. There is only your name to fill in, and you will receive five per cent. upon all the transactions you carry out."

He spoke in a calm and simple tone of voice. Marius was frightened at the responsibility of such a position; but he felt so sure of his uprightness that he did not hesitate to accept.

"I am at your commands," he said to Douglas. "You must guide and advise me. I know I shall have nothing to fear in obeying you in everything."

"So as not to overwhelm you at the outset," resumed the notary rising, "I will only entrust you with two powers of attorney to begin with."

He took some papers and returned to his table, where he read out the two documents after having filled in Marius' name. The powers conferred were practically

unlimited: the right to sell and buy, mortgage, and bring or defend actions. When the notary had finished reading he added:

"I must now give you some information respecting the persons you are to represent." He handed Marius one of the documents, and went on: "This, to begin with, is the authorization of my friend and client, M. Authier, of Lambesc. He is just now at Cherbourg, and will be shortly starting for New York, to take possession of a large fortune that has been left him. He purchased at Marseilles, before his departure, a building in the Rue de Rome. You will administer the property during his absence. I am expecting to receive his instructions to-morrow, and I will inform you of them."

He then took up the other document, and continued:

"And this is the authorization of M. Mouttet, a retired merchant at Toulon, who entrusted me with the capital necessary for taking a mortgage on a country house in the Saint Just district. He has just remitted a further sum which he wishes to have invested in the same way; but as he is a great sufferer from gout, he has asked me to find someone who, acting under his power of attorney, would give the necessary signatures in his stead. Come back to-morrow, and we can then arrange finally about the two matters."

Douglas rose as a hint that the interview was at an end. At the door, he shook Marius' hand with rough and cordial familiarity.

The young man withdrew, rather stunned by the rapidity of what had taken place. He was surprised at the facility with which the notary had entrusted him with such important matters, and felt ill at ease as he thought of the heavy responsibility about to weigh upon him.

CHAPTER VI.

MARIUS SEEKS UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR A HOUSE
AND A MAN.

MARIUS called on Douglas the next day to receive his final instructions.

"Come, you're punctual," said the notary smiling. "You'll see, we shall do plenty of business together. I intend to make you rich. Sit down, I'll attend to you in a minute."

Douglas was lunching at the corner of his table. He was eating stale bread with a few nuts, and drinking plain water. This frugality impressed Marius and removed the uneasiness he had hitherto felt. Such a sober man could not lead him into shady transactions; his was undoubtedly a heart in the right place, an upright soul, a sincere and pious mind devoted to its duty like a priest devotes himself to God.

"Now let's talk," said the notary, when he had finished his repast. "I have received a letter from M. Authier who wishes to raise money on his house, as he requires funds for his journey. Here's his letter."

Marius took the paper that Douglas held out to him. As he appeared to be looking for the post-office stamps, the notary said hastily:

"The letter was enclosed in a large envelope which contained several other documents."

The young man coloured up, fearing he had wounded his new employer's feelings. He read M. Authier's letter which indeed asked to have money raised on the house in the Rue de Rome. He instructed Douglas to make use of the power of attorney and to remit him the money at the earliest possible moment. When Marius had finished reading the letter, the notary resumed:

"This request for a loan comes at the right moment, for M. Mouttet has again been asking me to find him a safe and advantageous investment. As you are now the authorized representative of both my clients, the lender,

and the borrower, you will be able to satisfy them both at once. You have simply to give me your signature, and I will transmit to M. Authier the cash that M. Mouttet sent me for investment."

Marius thought Douglas was settling matters rather quickly. He would have liked to have seen the building, and to have exchanged at least a letter or two with the persons he was to represent. He did not doubt the notary's good faith, but he was unable to get rid of some vague and inexplicable fear. His uneasiness of the day before was returning; it seemed to him that he was descending into some black hole, and Douglas' smiles and soft voice troubled him strangely. He could not define the peculiar sensation that was creeping over him, he felt a need of reaction. The notary was already sorting out the documents which he required Marius to sign.

"Ah! the deuce!" said he, stopping suddenly, "there's one paper wanting. I must send a clerk to the mortgage office for it." Douglas seemed very much put out.

Marius, as though urged on by some instinct, and obeying the feeling of uneasiness which had taken possession of him, rose hastily.

"I cannot wait," he said, "I ought already to be at M. Martelly's. Put off the signing of the documents, please, until Monday, the day after to-morrow."

"Very well!" said the notary, after a moment's hesitation. "I would rather have finished the matter to-day. You know in what a hurry M. Authier is. However, come on Monday."

Marius breathed more freely when he found himself in the street. He thought he had been childish and felt ashamed of the vague suspicions he had entertained. He had almost run off under the spell of some indefinable feeling, and he shrugged his shoulders after the manner of a person who had been frightened of his shadow. He was glad, however, to have two days during which he could think matters over, and account for his repugnance and overcome it.

During the afternoon, he received a visit at M. Martelly's office which delighted him. M. de Girousse,

who was killing time by visiting all the towns of the department, called upon him. He had just reached Marseilles, and was leaving the same evening.

"Ah! my dear friend," said he to the clerk, "how lucky you are to be poor and to have to work for your living! You've no idea how bored I feel. If I could, I would change places with your brother: I think I should enjoy myself more in prison."

Marius smiled at the old count's strange ideas, whilst the latter continued:

"Philippe's trial helped to keep me going for a month. I never before assisted at such a fine spectacle of human misery and folly. I had a violent desire when in court to get up and say all I thought. They would no doubt have put me into a strait-waistcoat. Lambesc is becoming uninhabitable."

Ever since M. de Girousse had put in an appearance, Marius had been thinking of asking him to give him some information respecting M. Authier. He thought the count must surely know this man who belonged to the same little town as himself, according to what Douglas had said. He attempted to assume an indifferent air as he observed:

"But yet there are some rich people at Lambesc. You might cultivate their society and amuse yourself more. Do you know M. Authier, a landlord in your neighbourhood, I believe?"

"M. Authier," repeated the old nobleman, trying to remember, "M. Authier, I can recall no one of that name at Lambesc. And you say the gentleman owns property there?"

"Yes. He has recently bought a house at Marseilles, and he must have a pretty extensive estate close to your own."

M. de Girousse was still thinking hard.

"You must be mistaken," he said, at length. "I certainly know no M. Authier. I am certain there's no landlord in Lambesc of that name, for I amused myself by learning the names of all the persons in the place. One has to do something."

"Come, let's understand each other," resumed Marius, turning pale. "I mean a M. Authier who has just come into a large fortune; he is at the present time at Cherbourg and is about to leave for New York, where the relative, whose sole heir he is, died."

The count burst out laughing.

"What yarn's that you're telling me?" he exclaimed. "If such a thing were to happen at Lambesc, if one of my neighbours were to inherit the fortune of a rich uncle in America, do you think I should know nothing about it, and that I should not amuse myself during a whole week with the gossip such a romance would produce in my little town? I assure you again that there has never been an Authier at Lambesc, and that nobody there has ever inherited the mythical fortune you talk of."

Marius felt quite crushed. The count's words carried conviction with them, and Douglas alone could be the liar in all this. The young man did not dare express all he was thinking,

"What interest have you in this M. Authier?" asked M. de Girousse whose curiosity was excited.

"None at all," replied Marius stammering; "one of my friends told me about him, and I must have mistaken the name of the town he mentioned."

He still hesitated to accuse Douglas, and there was a buzzing sensation in his head which prevented his judging the matter clearly. It was in an absent-minded way that he clasped the hand M. de Girousse held out to him, with the words:

"Well, good-bye. Come to me at the opening of the shooting season. It'll amuse me."

When the count had gone, Marius remained in a painful state of perplexity. He must certainly have misunderstood. Yet, M. de Girousse's statements were clear and decisive: M. Authier was not known at Lambesc, and, therefore, Douglas had lied for some reason or other.

The young man did not dare fathom the consequences of this falsehood: he divined the existence of several pitfalls beneath his feet, and could account for the un-

easiness he had experienced when with the notary. Having at present nothing more than suspicions, he promised himself that he would discover the whole truth, before engaging further in the matter and giving his signature. He understood how serious the least accusation would be, and he decided to act with extreme prudence, without haste and without showing his mistrust.

The morrow was a Sunday, and Marius, having a free day before him, went the first thing in the morning to the Rue de Rome where the property Authier was supposed to have purchased was situated. It was a large, handsome house let out in flats to different persons. Armed with his power of attorney, Marius skilfully questioned each of these tenants, and was soon convinced that not one of them knew M. Authier, nor had even ever seen him, and that all of them had up till then dealt directly with Douglas, the notary.

The young man's suspicions were being confirmed. He thought he would put them to a final test and went to see the former owner of the building whose address one of the tenants gave him. His name was Landrol and he lived in an adjoining street.

"Sir," said Marius, "I am instructed by M. Authier to administer the property you sold him and I wish you to give me some information concerning the leases you granted and the rent you charged."

M. Landrol obligingly placed himself at his disposal and answered all his inquiries. Marius was very circumspect, and when he had spoken of one thing and another, he cleverly broached the real object of his visit.

"Very many thanks," he said, "and I regret to have taken up so much of your time. My excuse is that I have not been able to see M. Authier, who is at present away. It occurred to me that as you have had dealings with him, you could tell me something about him and give me some idea as to what his intentions were."

"But I never treated directly with M. Authier," Landrol replied simply. "I have never even seen the gentleman. The affair was carried through by M. Douglas who furnished me with all the necessary signatures."

"Ah! I thought M. Authier had inspected the building, which is the usual custom."

"Not at all. Don't you know that he has been in America for the last six months? M. Douglas inspected the house himself and bought it for his client, whose instructions he had received."

Marius bit his lip. He had almost allowed his terrible secret to escape him. The day before, the notary had told him that Authier had come from Lambesc to seek and purchase a house. The falsehood was now an absolute certainty. Authier could not be at the same time away in America—where he had been for the past six months—and also awaiting money at Cherbourg. No doubt the individual was no more known at Cherbourg or New York than he was at Lambesc. He was a pure fiction, an imaginary puppet whom Douglas had conjured up for some criminal design of his own. And Marius suddenly thought that the power of attorney filled up with his name was in reality a forgery which rendered the forger liable to a sentence of penal servitude. He blushed as though he were himself the culprit, and muttered some further thanks to Landrol who was eyeing him curiously, surprised to find him so badly informed as to the affairs of the person he was representing.

When Marius found himself alone in the street, he was obliged to submit to the evidence of his senses: only Douglas could have forged the document he had in his pocket. Yet the young man could not exactly understand the reason of the crime. The purchase-money of the building had been paid, so the only explanation he could hit upon was that the notary had acquired the property for himself under an assumed name in order to disguise the amount of his fortune. But even then, the crime was still there: Douglas, the pious and upright man, was a forger.

Marius feared for a time that Mouttet, the retired Toulon merchant, was also a dummy. He hastened to call on one of his friends, who had resided a long time at Toulon, and breathed more freely when, on questioning him, he learnt that Mouttet really existed and was one of Douglas'

clients. After this, still prompted by his suspicions, he decided to see the property upon which Mouttet held a mortgage. He had spent his morning in uselessly seeking a man, and he employed his afternoon in hunting for a house.

Brought up in the Saint Just district, in his mother's country-house, Marius knew all the residences of the neighbourhood. The property upon which Douglas professed to hold a mortgage in Mouttet's name belonged to a M. Giraud, in whose house the young man had often played when a child. He went at once to Giraud's and paid a friendly call, as though he had been strolling in the neighbourhood, and wished merely to shake hands with his old friend.

It was about mid-September. At the horizon the sea was slumbering, heavy and motionless, looking like an immense carpet of blue velvet. The country-side extended yellow with sunshine, hot and sweltering. A gentle breeze rose at times from the shore and went lightly through the branches of the quivering pine-trees. When Marius passed before the country-house where his mother had nursed him, a poignant emotion brought big tears to his eyes. Amidst the silence of this scorched and mournful desert, he fancied he could hear the beloved voice of the saintly woman whose memory sustained him in his task of deliverance which was weighing him down.

Giraud received him like the prodigal son.

"One never sees you now," he said. "Come here sometimes and try and forget all your troubles. You will find none but devoted friends here, who will help you to pass a few more pleasant hours."

Marius was touched at this reception. He had often despaired of humanity since he had found himself face to face with the wickedness of life. During an hour he quite forgot the reason of his visit. It was Giraud himself who gave an opening for the delicate inquiry the young man wished to institute.

"You see," said the master of the house, "we live happily here. We're certainly not over rich, but the few acres of land we possess suffice for our needs."

"I thought you were in straitened circumstances," replied Marius. "The harvests have not been good."

Giraud looked at the young man with surprise.

"Straitened circumstances," he said, "not a bit of it. Why do you say that?"

Marius felt himself changing colour.

"Excuse me," he stammered, "I don't wish to appear indiscreet. I was told that after the last harvest, you had been obliged to mortgage your property."

On hearing this, Giraud laughed aloud.

"Whoever told you that told you wrong," he resumed. "Thank heavens, I've never mortgaged a single inch of land."

"Yet," said Marius further, wishing to be quite sure, "I was told the notary's name. It's M. Douglas who is stated to have taken the mortgage."

Giraud continued laughing with his broad frank laugh.

"M. Douglas is a worthy man," he replied, "but whatever property he's got a mortgage on, it's certainly not mine."

The day before, Marius had seen the document in which Giraud's property was distinctly named and it, moreover, bore the owner's signature. The notary had, therefore, committed a second forgery, and this one could not be so easily explained as the first. He had evidently kept the money which Mouttet had intended to be invested for himself.

Marius withdrew, desirous of thinking everything over before acting. Authier did not exist, and the property on which Mouttet was supposed to have a mortgage was also a fiction, since Giraud declared it was not his. All this was a mystery which the young man dreaded to investigate.

On the Monday morning after a feverish night, he decided to call on the notary.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COWL DOES NOT MAKE THE FRIAR.

ON arriving at Douglas', Marius was surprised at the religious calm reigning in the large cold rooms which he knew to be the abode of crime. He could not accustom himself to such hypocrisy, and would have liked the very walls to have proclaimed aloud the notary's infamy. The quiet activity of the clerks, the respectable appearance of the house exasperated him and filled his mind with painful doubts. Pale and agitated, he had seated himself in the ante-room, when Douglas caught sight of him from his office, the door of which was open.

"Come in, come in," he cried; "you won't be in my way, and I'll attend to you in a minute."

Marius walked in, and found five or six priests there, among them Abbé Donadéi. This abbé, ever graceful and smiling, was cajoling the notary both by word and look. He had come to ask for alms.

"You are one of our friends," he was saying, "and we come to you every time the poor-boxes of our parishes are empty."

"You do well, sir," replied Douglas, rising, and taking some gold from a drawer. "How much do you want?" he asked the priest.

"Well," resumed Donadéi, in a soft tone of voice, "I think that five hundred francs will suffice. We are much in need of the assistance of pious and honourable persons——"

"Here are five hundred francs," said Douglas, interrupting him. And he added in a slightly trembling voice: "Pray for me, my father."

Then all the priests rose and surrounded the notary, thanking him and calling upon heaven to bless him. Douglas listened to them, erect and very pale, and Marius fancied he could see a slight nervous trembling of his lips and eyelids. Donadéi, with easy elegance, was inexhaustible in praise and flattering professions.

"The Almighty will repay you what you give us," he said. "He is already doing so by making your business prosper, and by bestowing on you the peace of mind that is only awarded to the righteous. Ah! sir, you are a grand example in this city which is being corrupted by the materialism of the century. I would that the whole of our commercial population imitated your simple life and possessed your piety and kindness of heart. One would not then see the horrible spectacle which Marseilles is presenting to us——"

Douglas seemed uneasy, and wearied by the priest's praise. He interrupted him a second time, and said as he showed him to the door:

"No, no, I am no saint. Every one is in need of divine mercy. If you think you owe me any thanks, be so good as to pray for me."

The priests made him a final bow, and at last withdrew.

Marius, seated in a corner of the room, had assisted at this scene in silence. He felt indignant at the comedy that was being played before his eyes. Perhaps Douglas felt that he was purchasing heaven's forgiveness, and paying well for it, with the money he had stolen. So this godly man, this kind-hearted soul who relieved those in distress, this Christian, who devoted so much of his time to the churches, was but a hypocrite and a scoundrel!

And as Marius thought thus, whilst watching the priests and notary, he fancied he was dreaming with his eyes open: he had come to overwhelm a forger, and he found himself confronted by a charitable man for whom the very Church was offering up prayers.

When the first moment of surprise was over, he felt a still more eager desire to do his duty. As the notary advanced towards him, smiling and with open and extended hand, he drew back slowly, gazing at him intently. Then, he said suddenly:

"Shut the door!"

Douglas, surprised, and as though incapable of resistance, went and closed it.

"Bolt it," resumed Marius, as harshly as before. "We have to talk together."

Douglas shot the bolt and came back, looking astonished and displeased.

"What is the matter with you, my dear friend?" he asked.

And as Marius, influenced perhaps by a last feeling of pity, did not answer, he continued:

"But after all, you're right. It's best to be alone when talking business. Well! are you ready? I have procured the document that was wanting, and now I only require your signature to complete Mouttet's mortgage on Authier's house. You know that we are pressed for time; I received another letter this morning from my client Authier who begs me to send him some money as quickly as possible."

The notary rose from his table, spread out some papers, and, dipping a pen in the ink, offered it to Marius, saying simply:

"Sign."

Marius had not said a word, but had quietly watched each of the notary's movements. Instead of taking the pen, he looked him straight in the face and said in a calm tone of voice:

"I went yesterday to see the house in the Rue de Rome. I saw the tenants and the former landlord, and they all tell me that they do not know M. Authier."

Douglas turned pale, and his lips had again that trembling motion Marius had already observed. He gathered the papers together, laid the pen down, and reseated himself as he stammered:

"Ah! You surprise me very much."

"The day before yesterday," continued Marius, "I received a visit from M. de Girousse, a rich landed proprietor of Lambesc, and he assured me that none of his neighbours was named Authier and that that person certainly did not exist. To-day, I know that he was not mistaken. What am I to think?"

The notary did not answer. He was gazing vaguely before him, changing colour and shaking, feeling himself lost, seeking no doubt in his despair, a means of explaining matters satisfactorily.

"I then went to the Saint Just district," resumed Marius

pitilessly. "The property upon which you told me you had taken a mortgage on your client Mouttet's behalf, happens to belong to one of my mother's old friends, M. Giraud, who assured me that his property was quite free. I ask you again, what am I to think?"

And, as Douglas still remained silent, the young man went on in a louder tone of voice:

"Well! since you refuse to answer, I will tell you myself what I believe and what is indeed true. Your M. Authier never existed; he's a puppet, whom you invented in order to accomplish some nefarious scheme more easily. In addition to this, you never took any mortgage, and you put Mouttet's money into your own pocket. To arrive at this fine result you have committed several forgeries, and to-day you are quite prepared to commit others in order to procure a further supply of cash for your needs."

It was as though Marius was speaking to an insensible and motionless statue. The notary's calm increased the young man's anger.

"I have not to judge your crimes," he continued, louder still; "but I have to ask you for an explanation of your unworthy conduct towards myself. What! you intended lightheartedly to mix me up in your dirty business; you would have compromised me, while professing to be my friend and knowing my position as a humble worker. I have the right, have I not? to tell you that you are a scoundrel!"

The notary did not wince.

"And just now," resumed Marius, "there were priests here blessing you. Ah! you played your part admirably. I alone in Marseilles know what you are, and were I to state in public the enormity of your crime, I should very likely be stoned, you have so skilfully duped everyone. Who would believe that the notary Douglas, that man esteemed by all, that frugal, religious individual, is shamelessly working in the dark the ruin of his numerous clients! I, myself, would still doubt, if doubt were possible, at seeing you seated so calm before me, in your humble and pious attitude of a monk at prayer. But say something, defend yourself, if you can!"

Douglas had taken up a paper knife, and was playing with it, as though indifferent to all Marius was saying to him.

"What would you have me tell you?" he replied at last. "You judge me as a child. I've let you have your say. Perhaps now you'll listen to me without interrupting."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NOTARY'S SPECULATIONS.

WHEN Marius heard Douglas accuse him of judging like a child, he was indignant, and opened his lips to tell him that he judged as an honest man would.

This forger thought it childish that he should be reproached with his forgeries, and he assumed the attitude of a misunderstood individual.

As the young man was on the point of protesting, the notary interrupted him with a movement of impatience.

"If you're always talking," he said, "you'll always be in the right. I let you insult me to your heart's content, so allow me to defend myself without interruption. I certainly would rather you had not become acquainted with my system. But as you have discovered a part of the truth, I prefer to tell you all. I know you are intelligent, and you will understand me better than any other. Moreover, I am worn-out, I have not been successful in the application of my theory, and I know very well that I am a lost man. That's why I consent to unbosom myself entirely to you. You will see that I never wished for anyone's ruin, and that it was with good faith that I offered, as a friend, to put you in the way of earning a little money. Anyhow, you will judge me, and I trust that after hearing my explanation, you will simply look upon me as an unfortunate speculator. Please listen to what I have to say."

Marius almost fancied he was dreaming. He looked at Douglas as one would look at a madman talking reason. The peaceful tone of the man, his want of remorse, his

self-satisfied manner, made him resemble some honest inventor sadly explaining, without cause for shame, why his invention has not succeeded.

"There's no need to go into details," he resumed, "and let us put aside the Authier and Mouttet matters, which are but of slight importance. The thing to see and judge is the whole vast and complicated machine that I had succeeded in establishing. You are surprised at my complaisance. Well, I tell you again I am a lost man, I can speak without fear of compromising myself. In fact, I experience a sort of pleasure in explaining my invention to you."

He took up the position, before Marius, of a man who has an interesting story to tell, and was still toying with the paper-knife.

"First of all," he said, "I recognise, with you, that I have betrayed my trust and that I am a great criminal if considered as a notary. But I have always looked upon myself as a banker, a money-dealer. In a word, please behold in me nothing more than a speculator. When I succeeded my former employer the practice was a very small one.

"My first efforts were directed towards making that practice the medium of a vast business connection. I was obliged to satisfy all requirements, lend to whosoever needed money, borrow of those who wanted to invest, sell to those who wished to buy, purchase of those who desired to sell. I was like the bird-catchers who make use of decoy-birds to call the wild ones; I invented some forty imaginary persons, in whose names I was able to embark in all kinds of transactions. Authier, I admit, was one of them. I was thus enabled to purchase a large number of buildings which I paid for by means of loans contracted by the fictitious purchasers, and by granting mortgages on these buildings. By these means I created a capital, a considerable turn-over, a much more extended practice, which served as a foundation to my credit."

Douglas was speaking in a clear tone of voice. He continued after a short silence:

"You must know that when one speculates on money one is at times brought face to face with terrible exigencies. I should have been forced to stop at the very outset of my speculations, if, my buildings being mortgaged, I had not been able to procure, by some means, the funds necessary for the other operations I was contemplating. I did what seemed to me the simplest and most convenient thing to do. When the mortgages had reached the full value of the properties, I released the latter by false discharges and then offered them as security for fresh loans."

"What you are telling me is infamous!" exclaimed Marius.

"I begged you not to interrupt me," Douglas retorted abruptly. "I will defend myself later on, at present I am merely stating the facts. I soon had to enlarge my system. My forty personages no longer sufficed, so I then had recourse to extreme measures which from their very audacity, succeeded perfectly. I caused well-known landowners and merchants to contract loans, mortgaged their properties and forged their signatures; afterwards each fresh mortgage was wiped out by the aid of a false discharge, which shielded me from all uneasiness. You understand? it's very simple."

"Yes, yes, I understand," murmured Marius, who was beginning to think the notary was mad.

"Besides," Douglas went on, "I raised money no matter how, when it was necessary. I wished to go straight to my goal, and I have ever marched steadily on without troubling myself about obstacles, and accepting freely the consequences of my theory. For instance, I sometimes created both the borrower and the building in the same transaction; I have taken mortgages on a property which did not exist or which did not belong to the pretended borrower. At other times, when I have been in urgent need of money to meet some unforeseen exigency, I have drawn bills payable to order and signed by the leading merchants of Marseilles, and which I have put into circulation at a loss after accepting them in my own name. You see that I am hiding nothing from you and that I am accusing myself. I am laying myself bare before you, because I wish to justify myself, and also because, in future, I must give over applying my system."

Marius was utterly terrified. He entered tremblingly the recesses of this man's mind. He felt that he was in the presence of a moral phenomenon, and he submitted to this strange confession like one submits to a nightmare. It seemed to him that he was in the thick of the roar and smoke of some machine, surrounded by the revolving gear.

"So," Douglas resumed, "you quite understand what my system was. In principle, I wished to be a banker. to turn to account the funds that passed through my hands. I acquired on my own account properties which I fancied I could resell at a profit. My system of fictitious names answered all requirements: by the aid of these names I was able to deal with all who applied to me; I have been, according to the opportunity, lender, borrower, purchaser, and seller. Whenever the funds raised by my personal credit or the credit I had procured for the fictitious individuals did not suffice for my needs, I obtained others by negotiating supposed loans on behalf of no matter who, relative, friend, or client, being careful later on to release that person's property, the same as I had mortgaged it, unbeknown to himself. In a word, my office became a banking establishment."

"A thieving establishment," exclaimed Marius, "a forger's den!"

Douglas shrugged his shoulders.

"You ought by now to understand me," he said, "and to see that I never sought to rob a single one of my clients. I have a hope that you will do me justice by and by. I have now to tell you about my finest invention. To administer the properties acquired and turn the borrowed monies to good account, I conceived the idea of establishing agents acting under power of attorney, who would represent in all matters my forty imaginary personages; and to fill these posts I selected honourable young men, who became my unconscious accomplices. I had faith in my system; and I should most certainly have enriched those who assisted me if unfortunate circumstances had not marred my success. When I proposed to you to represent Authier, I desired solely, as I have

already told you, to come to your assistance and give you a share in the profits of a speculation which I considered an excellent one."

These last words exasperated Marius. He could bear it no longer, and felt he would go mad if he continued to follow Douglas' strange talk.

"I have listened to you patiently," he said, shaking with indignation. "The rascalities you have been telling me of, with such cool impudence, prove to my mind that you are either a fool or a rogue."

"Not at all!" interrupted the notary, striking the table with his fist. "You have certainly not understood me. I have told you four or five times, I'm a banker. Listen to me, for goodness sake."

Douglas rose and placed himself before Marius. There was nothing in his attitude to indicate either fear or shame.

"You have called me a rogue and a thief," said he softly, "and I let you insult me, for you were accusing me in the name of society, speaking as the crown attorney would speak when judging my conduct from the legal stand-point. You must look at it from another point of view, if you would understand me. Let us reason a bit. A thief is he who steals another's property and makes off when his pockets are full, is he not? I have never for a moment thought of stealing. I have been applying my system during six years, and I am poorer now than when I first began; my operations have not succeeded, I have even lost some thousands of francs which were my own. You know what my life has been: I have lived on bread and water; I have led the existence of an austere and indefatigable worker. The only luxury I have allowed myself has been to give a little in charity. A strange thief, indeed, who has lived in his office as in a cloister and who has handled enormous sums of money without even being tempted to steal a copper! Admit that if I were really a thief, I should long ago have got together what funds I could and have bolted."

Marius felt surprised and embarrassed. He had not looked at the matter in that light. The man was evidently right: he could not be accused of robbery.

“What shocks and incenses you,” resumed Douglas, “is my system itself. It has failed, and I shall be considered a great criminal; if it had succeeded, I should have realized a large fortune without doing the slightest injury to anyone. I should have been immensely rich and the world would have esteemed me. Yes, crime has been my base of operation, I have speculated on forgery, I have followed a new and bold line. But to my mind success was certain. I had faith in my activity, it never occurred to me that I might drag another down in my fall. That is wherein I was blind. You see my course of proceeding: I took mortgages on property which did not exist or which had already been mortgaged, but I paid the interest on the money invested; I put forged bills into circulation, but I took them up at maturity; my imaginary personages were, so to say, nothing more than borrowed names to cover myself, and I made use of them simply to increase my speculations. Understand me well: I wished above all to procure funds and turn them to account; what matter the fictitious securities I emitted, the forged documents, the different means I employed to extend my credit and the sphere of my business. In speculation, the only reality is the profit one is able to draw, more or less skilfully, from a given capital. Take the Stock Exchange, for instance, there one trades on mere suppositions. Admit for a moment that by buying and selling properties, by means of other people’s money, I had succeeded in doubling the capital I had illegally procured: I should have refunded that capital in full, have robbed nobody, destroyed the forged documents, and have retired with a fortune won by my labour and intelligence. That’s my system in its entirety. Having no fortune of my own, I was obliged to borrow of my clients the principal necessary for carrying on my operations. It was no theft, but a mere loan.”

On hearing Douglas’ clear and logical reasoning, a kind of terror crept over Marius. The notary grew terribly in his eyes. For a moment, he looked upon him as some misguided genius who had employed his rare faculties of energy and daring in the cause of evil. Had the man

had large means of action he might perhaps have accomplished great things. There are some superior qualities residing in all criminals of Douglas' calibre. Marius was above all surprised by the simple and natural manner in which the notary spoke of the forgeries he had committed. His mind was undoubtedly disordered. The man was ill, the fever of speculation which devoured him had brought him little by little to look upon crime as an excellent medium, provided the crime remained concealed and unpunished. He had said it himself: though he had forged, he still considered himself an honest man, so long as he caused no one to lose anything. After a pause, Douglas went on, shaking his head the while:

"Systems are always splendid, practice alone opens your eyes to their defects. In theory, I should have won an immense fortune. I don't know how it has happened, but I am now overwhelmed with debt, and I can see very well that all hope is gone. My unfortunate operations have swallowed up over a million, and my clients are ruined."

The notary's voice had grown feebler, and emotion was filling his eyes with tears. He walked feverishly up and down, and, as he did so, continued:

"You've no idea what a frightful life I've been leading these past two years. Every one of my operations failed, and I found myself face to face with terrible exigencies. To preserve my credit, to conceal my forgeries, I have been daily obliged to commit others. I no longer dreamed of making money, I only thought of defending myself and escaping the galleys. I take heaven to witness that had I been able to get back the money that was lost, I would have reimbursed everyone, and then lived as a law-abiding citizen. But the enormous amount of interest I had to pay crushed me; I resold at a loss the properties I had acquired; in spite of my struggles, ill-luck has clung to me and weighed me down to the very depths of ruin. To-day my liabilities are considerable, I cannot meet this fortnight's bills, and, for me, a suspension of payment means penal servitude. If the authorities were ever to examine my papers, I should be at once arrested and put in prison."

Marius almost felt disposed to pity the wretch. Douglas sat down again and resumed dejectedly:

"After all, though, this is the end. I've confessed to you and I know that you're about to hand me over to justice. Let it be so, for my position is no longer bearable. You're right, I'm a scoundrel and I ought to be punished."

Marius did not stir. He was reflecting, uncertain how to act. One fear stayed him, he did not wish to be mixed up in the matter in case he should be called as a witness, and thus lose precious time which belonged to his mission. Moreover, it was not his business to denounce the notary. There was no escape now for the man, he was fatally on the road to his punishment, and would fall of his own accord into his judges' hands.

"Well! why do you hesitate?" asked Douglas. "You know all. I'll await here the police officers you are going for."

The young man rose from his chair, and tore up the documents containing his name.

"You are a wretch," he replied, "my judgment has not changed. But there is no need for me to assist justice, which will know how to punish you without my help. Your chastisement will come of itself."

And he walked out of the office.

Here is the end of this episode: On the morrow, Douglas, unable to meet his engagements, took to flight. Marseilles was panic-stricken at the news. Several fortunes were compromised, and it was impossible at first to gauge the full extent of the disaster. It was a kind of public misfortune. With the dismay of those concerned was mingled the astonishment of all honest persons: they could not forgive the notary the hypocrisy with which he had deceived a whole city during several years.

Douglas was caught and tried at Aix, in the midst of a terrible feeling of irritation. He accepted his position with rare coolness. Without his assistance the authorities would never have succeeded in unravelling such an intricate affair. The court had to pronounce on more than nine hundred deeds infected with every kind of forgery, varied in so many ways that the human mind could not have conceived

any combination of which the forger had not made use. The misdeeds laid to his charge were so numerous, were complicated with so many details, and affected so great a number of victims, that it would have been impossible to have seen clearly amidst the chaos without the assistance of him who, after imagining and putting his crimes into execution, could alone unravel the skein of them. Douglas set to work with indefatigable zeal and surprising truthfulness to clear up the disorder of his affairs, and to fix his own position, as well as those of his creditors and debtors.

He continued to energetically defend himself against the accusation of theft. He repeated that he was an unfortunate speculator, and if justice and circumstances had permitted him, he would have retrieved his affairs as well as those of his clients. He seemed to be accusing the court of binding his hands, of preventing him repairing the harm he had done.

He was condemned to penal servitude for life and to be publicly exhibited in the pillory at Marseilles.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW AN UGLY MAN MAY BECOME HANDSOME.

It was now more than two months since Marius and Fine had returned to Marseilles.

On leaving the notary's office, the young man had to own to himself that up till then he had been wasting his time, and that so far he had not obtained the first franc of the fifteen thousand he required for Philippe's safety. After all, he knew only how to show his love and devotion; he felt he had a soul too upright, a mind too loyal and too generously artless for him to be able to procure in a few weeks the large sum he was so despairingly seeking. He had always acted like a child. The deplorable incidents with which he had recently found himself mixed up, the loves of Armande and Sauvaire, Douglas' hypocrisy and forgeries, had shown him life under a terrifying aspect

which discouraged him. He retreated instead of advancing, he feared, in making another attempt, to fail and even compromise himself, by falling again into the hands of rogues who would take advantage of him. In his suspicious state, he saw nothing but snares around him. Such tender hearts, ignorant of evil and desirous of good, are predestined to be wounded and made to bleed at every hour of the day.

Yet the month of December was drawing nigh, and it was necessary to make haste if Philippe was to be saved. No further mercy would be shown, and the condemned man would be undoubtedly fastened to the infamous pillory. At that thought, Marius shed tears of impotence and weariness. He would he could have freed his brother by some herculean task; if he had been put to the proof, he would have undertaken to pierce the prison wall with his nails, to have scraped and crumbled the stone away beneath his fingers. That laborious exploit would not have appeared to him a hard one and he would have succeeded in it although he wore his fingers to the bone. But the thought of the fifteen thousand francs terrified him; once it was a question of money, of taking humiliating steps or of engaging in more or less equivocal dealings, he went off his head and felt incapable of conducting the least enterprise to a successful conclusion. This explained the artless confidence which had taken him to Armande and Douglas.

All hope, however, was not yet dead within him. Thanks to those same qualities which were his weakness, to his kindly heart and upright mind, he always returned to thoughts of self-reliance and hope. The lessons which the ignominies of life had taught him, could not prevent him still believing in the helpful sympathy of others.

"I have more than six weeks before me yet," he thought. "It's impossible that I shall not find some true friend by then. There's no reason for despair."

He would certainly have fallen ill with the anguish, the hopes and disappointments of his task, if he had not had a comforter at hand who smiled at him when most depressed. A strong friendship had grown up between him and the Cougourdans. He went nearly every day to see Fine

and spent long evenings in her society. At the beginning they talked together of Philippe; then, whilst not forgetting the poor prisoner, they conversed about themselves, about their childhood and future. These were chats quite free from all restraint which rested them after the fatigues and anxieties of the day, and gave them fresh courage for the morrow.

Every morning Marius, little by little, began ardently to long for the evening, in order to find himself back in Fine's little room. When he had a gleam of hope he ran to tell it to his friend, and when he had met with some disappointment he also hastened to relate it to her and be consoled. It was only there, in that clean and tidy attic which smelt so sweet and looked so gay, that he felt at ease in the midst of his tender sadness.

One evening he persisted in helping the young woman who was making up some bouquets for the morrow's sale; he took a childish delight in removing the thorns from the roses, in gathering up the pinks into slender bunches, in delicately taking one by one the violets and marguerites and handing them to Fine. From that time he became a florist every evening between eight and ten. The work amused him, he said, and quieted his anxieties. If ever his fingers touched Fine's when handing her the flowers, he felt a gentle warmth rise to his face; the strange uneasiness, the penetrating emotion he then experienced, was no doubt the sole cause of his sudden inclination for making bouquets.

Marius was certainly a simpleton. He would have been much surprised, even hurt, if anyone had told him that he was falling in love with Fine. He would have exclaimed that he knew he was much too ugly to dare to love the young woman, and that, moreover, such a love, born and developed in the shadow of his brother's misfortune, would have seemed to him a crime. But his heart would soon have protested.

He had never lived much in the society of a woman, and had let himself be caught by the first affectionate glance bestowed upon him. Fine, consoling and encouraging him, ever ready with a caressing smile and a warm pressure of

the hand seemed to him, at first, both a sister and a mother whom heaven had sent him in his affliction. The truth was that unbeknown to himself this sister, this mother, was becoming a bride, a bride whom he already loved with all the tender and devoted ardour of his heart. And this love was bound to spring up between two young people who wept and smiled in company. Chance had brought them together and their goodness was uniting them. They were worthy of each other, they possessed the all-powerful sympathy of devotion.

For some time past a sly smile, which Marius had failed to notice, had been playing about Fine's lips. She guessed the young man loved her long before he himself had become aware of his love. Women have a special gift of penetrating this sort of secret; they can read in their lovers' eyes and see into the innermost recesses of their souls. The flower-girl, however, was careful to hide her blushes; she schooled herself to remain Marius' cordial friend, and not to open his eyes by a warmer grasp of the hand. To see them each evening, seated opposite one another, with a table covered with roses between them, one would have taken them for brother and sister.

On Sundays Fine went to Saint Henri. She felt a sort of sympathetic pity, a compassionate friendship for Blanche. The poor young girl who was soon to become a mother, and whose life was for ever blighted, became every day dearer to her; she saw her remorse, her tears of regret, she assisted at her disconsolate existence, and sought by her visits to assuage her misery. She brought her bright smile to that little house by the sea, where Blanche was weeping as she thought of Philippe and her unborn babe. It was like a holy pilgrimage for the flower-girl and she accomplished it religiously. She started off about midday, after luncheon, and remained till dusk with Mademoiselle de Cazalis. In the evening, as night was falling, she found Marius waiting for her on the sea-shore, and they returned together to Marseilles on foot, arm-in-arm like a young married couple.

Marius tasted pure joy during these walks. Sunday

evening became for him the reward of all his efforts of the week. He waited for Fine by the sea, forgetful of his sorrows, feverishly watching for the young woman's arrival; then, when she was there, they smiled at each other and returned slowly in the soft shadows of the gathering night, exchanging words of friendship and hope. Never did the young man think the road long enough.

One Sunday, Marius arrived early. As a feeling of delicacy prevented him calling at Blanche's house and so adding to her grief, he sat down on the cliff which rises near the village, and took patience in watching the blue immensity spread out before him. He remained there nearly two hours, lost in a vague reverie, in thoughts of love and happiness which softly lulled him. The immense horizon moved him; unconsciously, his love for Fine rose from his heart to his lips; the sea and sky, the infinity of the waters and the air affected him, opened his soul; he beheld but Fine in the boundless sea, he heard but her name in the dull and regular murmur of the waves.

The flower-girl arrived and seated herself on the rock beside the young man, who took her hand without speaking. Before them was spread the sea and heavens, both of a soft pale blue. Twilight was falling. Profound serenity was alike enfeebling the last sounds and the last rays. Thin rosy gleams in the west were casting their delicate reflections on the rocks of the shore. There was a breath of tenderness in the air, a great quivering voice which grew softer and softer. Deeply moved, Marius kept his friend's hand in his, as he continued his dream. His eyes fixed on the horizon, on that vague haze where heaven and sea mingle together, he was smiling sadly. And in a low voice, and quite unconsciously, his lips gave utterance to the thoughts of his heart.

"No, no," he murmured, "I am too ugly."

From the moment Marius took her hand, Fine had been smiling in her sly and tender way. At last her friend was going to make up his mind to speak; she guessed it from the deeper look in his eyes, his tighter grasp. When she heard the young man say he was too ugly, she seemed surprised and annoyed.

“Too ugly!” she exclaimed; “but you are quite handsome, Marius!”

Fine had put so much feeling into the cry which had escaped her, that Marius looked round and clasped his hands, as he gazed at her anxiously. She, feeling that she had abruptly delivered up the secret of her heart, lowered her face, which became covered with blushes. She remained thus, speechless and embarrassed, during some seconds. But she was not the girl to withdraw from the complete avowal of her love; she possessed too much frankness and sprightliness to indulge in the hypocritical comedy which most young persons in love go through on similar occasions. She courageously raised her face and looked straight at Marius, who was trembling.

“Listen, my friend,” she said to him. “I wish to speak frankly. Six months ago I hardly thought of you at all. I considered you to be ugly, no doubt I had never really looked at you. To-day, I think you quite handsome. I don’t know how it has happened, I assure you——”

In spite of her resolution, she hesitated a little, and sudden blushes again covered her cheeks. She stopped short, unable to tell Marius plainly that she loved him. She knew the young man’s timidity and had spoken solely to encourage him.

Marius remained in his state of tender ecstasy; he required no more, and would have remained there on the cliff all night, without seeking to obtain from Fine a more complete avowal. She was growing impatient.

The story of her love was a simple one. At first she had admired Philippe’s tall frame and energetic countenance, with that blindness of young girls which prompts them to choose handsome lads, those who carry all their beauty on their faces and none in their souls. Then wounded to the heart by the indifference of Blanche’s lover, seeing at last clearly into his vain nature, she had begun to look more severely upon his conduct and had become little by little estranged from him. It was at this time that she found herself frequently with Marius, in an intimacy which brought them closer and closer together.

In this instance love had been born of kindliness.

Marius, ugly to the eyes became beautiful for the heart. At first, Fine had seen in him merely a disheartened friend who needed help; she had undertaken half his task in a sisterly way, prompted a little by love for Philippe and a great deal by a natural desire to be serviceable. She had therefore joined Marius, and their common thought of deliverance had united them more each day. It was thus that their affection grew, they loved each other through their self-devotion, whilst living on the same hope and working for the same object.

And it was in the accomplishment of this generous task that Marius became handsome. The comparison which Fine could not help drawing between Philippe and Marius, made the latter appear an exceptional being, the charming prince of young girls' dreams. Marius' countenance became forthwith transfigured in her eyes; it appeared to her quite handsome with all the beauty of his loyal and tender nature. She would have been immensely surprised had anyone told her her lover was ugly.

Marius could still hear the young woman's cry, that cry of the heart which as good as told him: "You are handsome, and I love you!" He dared not speak, fearing to dispel the sweet dream which was so deliciously soothing his mind. Fine, in her embarrassment, continued to smile.

"You don't believe me?" she asked, speaking merely for the sake of speaking, and scarcely knowing what she was saying.

"Yes, I believe you," Marius replied in a low deep voice, "I need to believe you. When you were not there, the murmur of the waves told me a secret. I don't know what is the matter with the sea and the sky this evening. They speak in so sweet a voice that they have moved my heart and disturbed my mind. At this close of day, amidst the sadness of the twilight, I have just discovered within myself a happiness I had never dreamed of. Would you like to know the secret the waves whispered in my ear?"

"Yes," said the young woman, while her emotion caused her hand to tremble.

Marius leant towards her, and murmured in a faint and timid tone of voice:

"The waves told me that I loved you."

The shadows were falling more grey and solemn. In the heavens, lights appeared amid a milky transparency. The dark blue motionless sea was slumbering as it wafted its sluggish heavy breath. Fresh and briny odours arose, borne by the evening breeze, and the serenity of space spread in the advancing night. The hour was a fit one for an avowal of love. A divine tenderness, a smiling calm came from the vast compassionate sea. At the foot of the cliff the waves were slowly breaking, lulling the sleeping coast; whilst, from the earth, still hot and feverish, rose a fierce breath of passion. It seemed as though the vast sea was adding its voice to Marius's tender words.

"Well," said the flower-girl gaily, "the waves are chatter-boxes. But did they tell you the truth?"

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, "the waves spoke the truth. I feel it now, my friend, I've been loving you for months past. Ah! what a lot of good this avowal does me. For a long time past I have felt there was something wanting: when I was in your presence, I became penetrated by some pleasant sensation, I could hear some indistinct voices within me, and I could not make out what they were whispering. Now, the silence of this cliff has sufficed for me to hear them tell of my love."

Fine listened to Marius's words with a smile on her lips. The shadows were becoming more and more bluish and mysterious. Marius hesitated for a moment, then asked in soft and humble tone of voice:

"You are not angry at what I am telling you? I know very well that you cannot love me."

"You know nothing at all," replied Fine, with abrupt tenderness. "Good heavens! what a time you are making up your mind! My answer has been ready for more than a month past."

"And what is it?"

"Ask the waves," the young woman answered, with a laugh.

She held out her hands to Marius, who kissed them passionately. It was now quite dark, and the dull moan of the sea lingered voluptuously in the gloom. The young man bent over the young woman and their lips met. Then they talked as lovers do, in the puerile way of children, going from recollections of the past to projects for the future. Their voices were a music which caressed them, and they talked to hear each other speak, to feel one another's warm breath play about their faces. They were so happy in the obscurity, in face of the infinite which lay open before them!

"Listen," said Fine, "we will get married when your brother is free. Philippe must be placed in safety first."

At the mention of Philippe's name, Marius shuddered. He had forgotten his brother. The sad reality rose before him. For two hours he had been living in the seventh heaven, and now he had fallen back to the earth from the height of his dream.

"Philippe," he murmured despondently, "yes, we must think of him. O heavens! is my happiness already dead? You love my brother, do you not? For mercy's sake, tell me the truth."

Fine said nothing, but burst into sobs. The young man's words were breaking her heart. In his despair, he pressed for an answer, and at last the flower-girl cried:

"I love you because you are good, because you know how to love. So you see well enough that I cannot love Philippe."

There was such a burst of faith and love in this cry that Marius at last understood. He placed his arms around her in a sudden transport of adoration. And then he had a slight feeling of remorse.

"We are happy," he observed, "and egotistical. Whilst we are breathing here the free air of heaven, our brother is pining in prison. Ah! we know not how to work for his deliverance."

"Yes, you'll see!" Fine replied. "You'll see what one can do, when one's in love and loved in return."

They remained hand in hand, without saying another word, while the sea continued to lull their love with its

monotonous voice. The stars were shining brightly as they re-entered Marseilles, their hearts full of their young hopes and affection.

CHAPTER X.

HOSTILITIES ARE RENEWED.

BLANCHE passed her days in tears. The autumn was giving a pale hue to the melancholy horizon, the season was becoming cold and dreary. Chill blasts stirred the sea whose voice had changed into a wail, whilst the trees were casting their leaves upon the ground. Beneath the mournful nudity of the heavens lay the bareness of the sea and shore.

This sadness of the air, this last farewell of summer spread over Blanche's surroundings the despair which already filled her heart. She led a retired life in the little house by the shore. It was situated a short distance from the village of Saint Henri, stood alone upon a cliff and overlooked the sea which beat against the rocks beneath the windows. Blanche would spend whole days together watching and listening to the waves, whose constant noise soothed her sufferings. This was her sole diversion; she followed with her eyes the great sheets of foam which broke and leapt into the air; her aching being found relief in presence of the mild and monotonous immensity.

Occasionally of an evening she would go out, accompanied by her companion. She would descend to the sea-shore and seat herself on a fragment of rock. The cool night breeze calmed the fever that was consuming her. She would linger in the darkness, deafened by the breaking of the waves upon the beach, and not return home until she was shivering with the cold. The same thought was ever oppressing her. At each succeeding hour it was there, overwhelming, inexorable. In the chilliness of the night or the warmth of the day, in presence of the infinite or before the void of darkness, Blanche thought of Philippe and her unborn babe.

Fine was her great consoler. If the flower-girl had not consented to spend the Sunday afternoons with her, the poor young creature would have died of despair. She felt an imperious need of confiding her grief to some kind soul. Solitude frightened her; for, when she found herself alone again, her remorse rose before her like a spectre and filled her with terror. Directly Fine arrived, they both went up to a little room where they shut themselves in to talk and weep undisturbed. The window stood open, and far away, on the blue velvet of the sea, white sails would pass like messengers of hope. And, on each occasion, the same tears were shed, the same words spoken, heart-rending and pathetic.

"Oh! how gloomy life is," said Blanche. "I've been thinking all day of the hours I passed with Philippe among the rocks of Jaumegarde and the Infernets. I ought to have killed myself in those gulfs, have fallen down some precipice."

"Why be always weeping, ever regretting?" Fine gently replied. "You're no longer a little girl, and have sacred duties to fulfil. For heaven's sake, think of the present, and no longer linger in an ever irreparable past. You will end by making yourself ill, by killing your child."

Blanche shuddered.

"Kill my child!" she resumed, amidst her sobs. "Do not say that. The child must live to atone for my transgression and obtain my pardon. Ah! Philippe was right when he said that I should belong to him for ever. Though I denied him, I have vainly tried to tear the memory of him from my heart. My pride has been crushed, and I have been obliged to yield to the love filled with remorse which is torturing me. And, to-day, I love Philippe more than ever I did before, with all my regrets and all my despair."

Fine said nothing. She would have liked to have seen Blanche stronger and prepared for the difficult task maternity was about to bring her. But Mademoiselle de Cazalis was always the poor, weak creature who could do nothing but cry. The flower-girl determined to act herself when the time came.

"If you knew," continued Blanche, "how I suffer when you're not here! I feel Philippe torturing me: he lives again in my child, and is ever with me, reproaching me with my perjury. He is always before me, or about me. I can see him on his pallet, in his cell, I hear him complaining and cursing me. I would I had no heart, then I might live in peace."

"Come, you must be calm," said Fine.

With such despair consolation is often powerless. The young woman assisted with a certain terror at these scenes of distress. She studied Blanche's shattered love like a physician studies some strange and terrible malady, and said to herself: "That is how one suffers, that is what one becomes, when one loves timidly."

One day, when in one of her fits of despair, Blanche said in a broken voice, with her eyes fixed upon her companion:

"You are going to marry him, are you not?"

Fine did not at first understand Blanche, who added hastily:

"Hide nothing from me. I would rather know all. You are a good girl and will make him happy, and I prefer to see him married to you than to know he is gadding about Marseilles. When I am dead, tell him that I always loved him."

And she burst into sobs. The flower-girl gently took her hands.

"I beg you," she said, "think no more of your lover, but think of your child. If possible, forget everything for it. Besides, be easy, I shall never marry Philippe, though I may become his sister—"

"His sister?" interrupted Mademoiselle de Cazalis.

"Yes," answered Fine, smiling sweetly as she thought of Marius. "I love and am beloved."

And she told her the story of her love, appeasing her fever by speaking to her of Marius. As she listened to the recital of this peaceful courtship, Blanche's tears fell less fast. From that day forth, she loved Fine far more; she felt only a faint sadness when thinking of Philippe, and determined to devote herself to her child. True

love, the devoted generous love of her friend had entered her heart.

Sometimes, Fine found Abbé Chastanier in the little house on the cliff. The priest took Blanche the consolations of religion; he sustained her by talking to her of Heaven, by withdrawing her thoughts from the world and its passions. He would have liked to have seen Made-moiselle de Cazalis enter a convent, for he felt that there was no longer any happiness possible for her amid the pleasures of society. She would have to remain everlastingly a widow, and she did not possess the strength of mind necessary to make herself a peaceful existence in her widowhood. But the poor priest was very ignorant of matters relating to the heart. Blanche much preferred to weep with Fine whilst talking of Philippe, than to listen to Abbé Chastanier's sermons. Yet the old man spoke to her at times in profound accents, and the girl looked at him with surprise, seized with a desire to penetrate into the peaceful world in which he lived. She wished to kneel down, to remain for ever in obeisance, absorbed in an ecstasy that would have delivered her from all her sufferings. It was thus that she became little by little that which she was destined to be, a servant of God, one of those holy women whom the world has wounded and who ascend to heaven before their death.

One day, Abbé Chastanier remained till evening, and left with Fine. He had to tell the flower-girl some bad news which he did not wish to mention before Blanche. He found Marius on the shore awaiting his sweetheart.

"My dear child," he said, "there is more trouble in store for you. M. de Cazalis wrote to me yesterday. He is much surprised that the sentence pronounced against your brother has not yet been carried out, and informs me he is taking steps to hasten the date of the public exhibition in the pillory. How are you getting on? Do you hope soon to secure the prisoner's release?"

"Well, no," replied Marius sorrowfully, "I am no farther advanced than on the first day. I hoped to have still at least six weeks before me."

"I do not think," the abbé resumed, "that M. de

Cazalis will be able to induce the president to break faith with us. Besides, our interview has remained secret, and that makes me believe that the exhibition will not take place till the end of December, as promised. But I advise you to make haste. One can never say what may happen, and I thought it right to let you know what I had been told."

Fine and Marius were in dismay. They returned to Marseilles with the priest, silently and again a prey to their anguish. Their love had in a sense blinded them during a week, and now they once more beheld the same abyss before them.

CHAPTER XI.

DOUGLAS IN THE PILLORY AT MARSEILLES.

SOME few mornings afterwards, towards nine o'clock, as Marius was on his way to his office, he found the Rue Paradis full of a noisy crowd which was going in the direction of the Cannebière. He stopped at the corner of the Rue de la Darse, and, standing on tip-toe, caught a glimpse of the Place Royale full of people. It was like a sea of human heads. The unceasing flow of the crowd about him continued on its way with a noisy hum.

The keen curiosity evinced by the mob gradually took hold of Marius also. Stray words which he caught from time to time filled him with vague anxiety; and he also wished to go and see: he allowed himself to be carried along by the crowd which was streaming down the street like a torrent. He easily reached the Place Royale, but there the throng which surged from the Rue Paradis broke itself against a compact immovable mass of people. All were standing on tip-toe, and looking in the direction of the Cannebière.

The young man obtained a vague view of some soldiers on horseback. He could distinguish nothing else, and did not yet guess what painful sight could thus attract the entire population of the city. The crowd about him was

shouting. Voices gave utterance to sudden sharp words which rose above the discordant hum of the multitude, and reached him distinctly.

“He arrived from Aix during the night.”

“Yes, and he’ll start to-morrow for Toulon.”

“I should like to see what figure he cuts.”

“They say he burst into sobs, when he saw the executioner bring the cords.”

“No! no! he kept up well. Believe me he’s a plucky fellow, who doesn’t weep like a woman.”

“Ah! the scoundrel! the people should stone him.”

“I shall try and get nearer.”

“Wait for me. They must be hooting him there. I want to join in.”

These words, interspersed with jeers, and yelled out with angry gesticulations, sounded cruelly in Marius’ ears. A genuine terror seized him, and a cold sweat broke out on his forehead. He was frightened and incapable of reasoning. He asked himself in his anguish who the man could be whom the mob was hurrying to insult. The crowd was growing denser and more eager every moment; and he saw that he would never be able to pierce the formidable mass before him. So he decided to get round the Place Royale. He went slowly down the Rue Vacon, took the Rue Beauveau, and eventually reached the Cannebière. There, a strange sight awaited him.

The whole extent of the Cannebière, from the harbour to the Cours Belzunce, was filled by an immense mob which was added to every minute. Throngs of people were streaming down every street. At times, a breath of anger rushed through the crowd, and then shouts arose, spread like vast billows, with the deep murmur of the sea. All the windows were filled with spectators; urchins had climbed up the shop-fronts along the houses. All Marseilles was there, and each head was eagerly gazing in the same direction. There were more than sixty thousand persons on the Cannebière staring and hooting.

When Marius had succeeded in drawing near, he then understood what kind of sight was attracting and detaining the crowd. In the centre of the Cannebière, opposite the

Place Royale, stood a scaffold made of rough planks, on which was a man tied to a post. Two companies of infantry, a picket of mounted gendarmerie and chasseurs were drawn round the platform and protecting the culprit against the increasing fury of the mob.

At first Marius only beheld the wretch fastened to the pillory and towering above the crowd. A horrible anxiety made him seek to see the man's face. Perhaps it was Philippe! Perhaps M. de Cazalis had succeeded in having the date of the execution of the sentence advanced! At that thought Marius' sight became confused, tears filled his eyes, and there was like a thick cloud hanging before his gaze which prevented him distinguishing anything. He leant against a shop, feeling faint, and stabbed to the heart by each shout of the crowd. In his feverish state, he ended by really believing that he recognised his brother on the scaffold, that it was indeed Philippe who was there and whom the multitude was insulting. The shame, pain, and pity which then took possession of him, filled him with atrocious anguish. During several minutes he remained like one annihilated; then he recovered sufficient courage to raise his head and look.

The wretched man was firmly tied to the post. He wore a vest and trousers of grey canvas. His head was covered by a cap, and he had drawn the peak down over his eyes. He obstinately held his head bent, thus preventing the spectators seeing his features. His face was turned towards the port, and he never once raised his head to gaze at the broad sea which spread out before him, free and happy.

When Marius had again looked at the prisoner, he felt a doubt and with it relief. The man seemed twice as stout as his brother. Moreover, he knew Philippe, and was confident that he would not have bowed his head thus, but would have considered it a duty to return the crowd scorn for scorn. Yet Marius still had a vague fear: the hidden face disquieted him, he would have liked to have had a clear view of the culprit's features.

All about the young man the mob continued to utter exclamations, yells of anger or irony.

"Hold up your head, you rogue! show us your face, you scoundrel!"

"Oh! he'll never look up, he's frightened."

"Well, he's harmless now. He's got his hands tied and will never again rob anybody."

"You think so, do you? He almost stole his pardon."

"Yes, yes, some rich, pious people tried to have him spared the ignominy of the pillory."

"A poor man wouldn't have met with such sympathy."

"But the king didn't give way; he said the punishment must be the same for all scoundrels, whether high or low."

"Oh! the king's a good fellow."

"Hi! Douglas, rogue, rascal, thief, hypocrite, you won't play any more of your pranks, my friend; you won't go again to church to pray to have your forgeries concealed!"

Marius breathed more freely. The cries he heard told him at last who was the sufferer. Then he recognised Douglas, he caught a distinct view of the ex-notary's pale fat face. But, in the inmost recesses of his heart, he thought of his brother, and remembered that Philippe also might have to confront the jeers and howls of the mob.

The multitude was still roaring.

"He's ruined more than fifty families. Penal servitude is too light a punishment for him."

"We should take the law into our own hands."

"Yes, that's it, we'll capture him and lynch him, when he passes by."

"Look how comfortable he seems up there."

"He doesn't suffer half enough, he ought to be hung up by his feet."

"Ah! there's the executioner about to untie him. Come along."

It was true, and Douglas left the scaffold. He was placed in a little open cart, drawn by a single horse, which was to take him back to the prison. At this moment, there was a great commotion amongst the people. Everybody rushed forward, to hoot and perhaps kill the wretch. But the foot soldiers surrounded the cart whilst those on horseback galloped about and broke up the mob.

Marius looked a last time at the culprit with intense pity. The man was, no doubt, very guilty, but the calvary of shame he was ascending turned him rather into an object of commiseration than of anger. The young man had remained leaning against a shop. As he was watching the departure of the cart, he heard two workmen, who were passing by, say:

"We'll come back next month. You know, they're going to exhibit that fellow who carried off the young lady. It'll be more amusing."

"Ah! yes, Philippe Cayol. I knew him, he's a big chap. We must find out the proper day so as not to miss it. There'll be a fine to-do."

The workmen went off, and Marius remained with a pale face and an aching heart. The men were right: in a month's time it would be his brother's turn. And he reflected that chance had caused him to assist at all the horrors Philippe would have to go through. He knew now what sufferings awaited him, he could fancy him in Douglas' place and pictured to himself the horrible scene that would be enacted. His anguish kept him a long time with closed eyes and ears full of a confused hum: he was seeing Philippe on the scaffold, and listening to the laughing crowd insulting him.

CHAPTER XII.

MARIUS LOSES HIS WITS.

As Marius was leaning against the shop-front, his eyes fixed on the ground, and deeply affected by the scene at which he had been assisting, he felt a hand laid on his shoulder with friendly roughness. He looked up and beheld Sauvaire, the master-stevedore, before him.

"Well! my young friend, what on earth are you doing there?" Sauvaire exclaimed, with a hearty laugh. "One would think you were going to be tied to that post." And he pointed to the scaffold.

Sauvaire was gaily dressed: he wore a coat and trousers

of fine cloth, and his partly buttoned waistcoat gave a view of his white shirt. His heavy watch-chain, with its massive charms, was displayed complacently. As it was scarcely ten o'clock, the master-stevedore was still in his slippers, with his soft felt hat cocked on his head and his beautiful meerschaum pipe between his teeth. One felt that the whole pavement of the Cannebière belonged to him; he was quite at home there, occupying as much room as possible, and watching the passers-by in a familiar and patronizing way. With his hands in his pockets stretching out his trousers, his legs wide apart, he examined Marius with a look of superiority that was full of condescension.

"You seem worried and ill," he added. "Do as I do: keep well, eat and drink heartily, lead a merry life. Ah! as for me, I don't know what grief is. I'm strong, I've got a good digestion, and I can spend a hundred francs whenever I like. I know one must be well off to do as I do. Everybody isn't rich."

He eyed Marius pitifully, and found him so puny and pale, that he was delighted at feeling himself plump and red beside him. At that moment he would willingly have lent the young man a thousand francs.

Marius was not listening to his prating. He had shaken his hand in an absent-minded way, and had then plunged again into his gloomy thoughts. He was thinking with despair that he had been vainly struggling for three months without having made the slightest headway. The post erected before him was awaiting Philippe; and it seemed to him that his feet were rooted to the pavement, and that he was unable to run to his brother's assistance. At that moment, he would have sold himself to obtain a few thousand francs, he would have committed a mean action. Receiving no reply, Sauvaire continued prating. He liked to hear the sound of his own voice.

"Deuce take it!" he said, "a young man should amuse himself. But poor you! you don't amuse yourself enough, you work too hard, my young friend. Ah! it requires a lot of money: pleasures cost dear. As for myself, I some weeks spend enormous sums. You can't amuse yourself

as much as that, it'd be impossible; but yet you might have a bit of a fling. You've got a trifle of money, haven't you? Listen! shall I take you some evenings to places that'll enliven you up?"

The master-stevedore thought himself very generous in making Marius this proposal. He waited awhile for the young man to thank him. But as he still maintained his silence of despair, he took his arm in an authoritative way and led him along the pavement.

"I'll take you in hand," he exclaimed, "I'll show you life. I intend you to be almost as lively as myself in a week's time. I eat in the best restaurants; I know the prettiest women in Marseilles, and, as you see, I stroll about all day. That's the way to live!"

He stopped, and, folding his arms, planted himself abruptly before Marius.

"Do you know at what time I went to bed?" he resumed. "At three o'clock this morning! And would you like to know where I passed the night? At the Corneille Club, where there was a fine old gamble. Just fancy, there were two delightful creatures there, women attired in velvet, with jewels and lace, things so costly that one is afraid to touch them with the tips of one's fingers. Clairon, a little dark woman, won over five thousand francs."

Marius looked up sharply.

"Ah!" he said in a strange voice, "can one win five thousand francs in a single night?"

Sauvaire burst out laughing.

"Good heavens! what a simpleton you are! I have seen larger sums than that won. Some people have luck. Last year I knew a young man who won sixteen thousand francs in a couple of nights. He came to the club with me, and hadn't a copper on him. I lent him five francs, and two days after he was in possession of sixteen thousand. We spent them together. Heavens! didn't I just amuse myself during the month they lasted!"

A red flush came to Marius' face. He felt a tremor pass up him and burn his chest. He had never before experienced so painful a sensation.

"Doesn't one have to be a member of a club to be able to play there?" he asked.

The master-stevedore smiled and winked his eye in a knowing manner, shrugging his shoulders the while.

"I thought," resumed Marius, "that strangers were not allowed in a club, and that only the members, who had paid a subscription, could play there."

"Yes, yes, that's correct," replied Sauvaire laughing, "only members have the right to play. But strangers, who have not that right, are generally more numerous around the gaming-table, and play for higher stakes than the members. Do you understand?"

It was now Marius who took hold of Sauvaire's arm, and they went a few steps in silence. Then the young man asked his companion in a stifled voice:

"Could you take me to-night to the Corneille Club?"

"Bravo!" exclaimed the master-stevedore. "We'll have a laugh. I see you're beginning to understand life. Look you, wine, love and cards, that's the ticket for me. When I saw you looking so pale, I said to myself: 'There's a youngster I must take in hand!' Try and win some money, be quick and get a sweetheart, and you'll soon grow fat, or the devil take me! Certainly, I'll conduct you to-night to the Corneille Club and I'll introduce you to Clairon."

Marius made a movement of impatience. He cared nothing for Clairon! A fixed idea was occupying his brain. Since it was possible to win sixteen thousand francs at play in a couple of nights, he wished to tempt fortune and obtain Philippe's ransom from chance. And he said to himself that Providence would watch over him, that he would leave the club with his hands full of gold. Something had gone wrong in his healthy, upright mind. Beneath the repeated blows of disaster the good sense he possessed had become clouded. Everything was weighing him down. In bringing him the news of M. de Cazalis' fresh proceedings, Abbé Chastanier had dealt him the first blow. Then Douglas in the pillory, that terrible sight, had completed his perturbation, driving him mad by spreading before his eyes the spectacle of the infamous

punishment that awaited his brother. He was now quite losing his wits. Reduced to powerlessness, not knowing where to turn in his supreme anguish, he looked upon gambling as a providential means which would either help him out of his difficulty or plunge him more deeply into the abyss of his despair.

Besides, he was acting in a state of fever, no longer knowing what he was doing, obeying simply the instincts of the beast. He looked at Sauvaire, wondering whether it was virtue or crime which had placed this man across his path, at the moment when the thought of the steps the deputy was taking and of Philippe's punishment was torturing him. At that instant, he would have accepted anything, he would have fought ill-luck with no matter what weapons.

"Well! that's agreed," resumed Sauvaire, as he took leave. "Where shall I meet you, this evening?"

"I'll be here, on the Cannebière, at ten o'clock," replied Marius.

He left the master-stevedore and went to his office. He had never before been in such a state of over-excitement. He passed a terrible day, shaking with fever, his brow heated, a vacant gaze in his eyes, and full of eager desire as he thought of the night that was coming. He was dreaming awake, and beheld the gold heaping up before him; he fancied himself already rich and imagined his brother was free. In the evening he went to see Fine, as usual, at about eight o'clock. The young woman noticed how heated his hands were.

"Whatever is the matter with you?" she asked him anxiously.

He stammered, and hurried away with the words:

"Don't ask me anything. Philippe will be free and we shall all live happily."

He called at his lodging to take a hundred francs which he had saved up one by one, and then went to meet Sauvaire. At ten o'clock, they both entered the Corneille Club.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GAMBLING-HOUSES OF MARSEILLES.

BEFORE relating the next episode of this drama, before showing Marius a prey to all the anxieties of the gambler, it is necessary to explain the causes which led to the increase of gambling-houses in Marseilles. The writer of these lines would like to display, in all its hideous nakedness, the festering sore which preyed upon one of the wealthiest and liveliest cities of France. The reader will pardon his short digression in consideration of its usefulness.

It is to be observed that the passion for gambling plays the most havoc in the great centres of commerce. When a whole population is given over to unbridled speculation, when all classes in a city are trafficking from morn to eve, it is almost impossible that this throng of dealers should not plunge into the keen emotions of gambling. Gaming then becomes an additional speculation to be added to the others; people speculate on chance, and continue during the night the occupation of the day; during the day-time they have been trying to increase their fortune by selling no matter what, and, at night-time, they seek to add to the profit by risking it at the gaming-table. If it is true that trade is often a game, the traders may believe that they are not going out of their element when they pass from their counters to the neighbouring gambling-houses.

The commercial fever, too, is contagious. In the face of certain great fortunes accumulated in a few years, there is not a young man at Marseilles who does not dream of similar luck. Everyone wishes to go into business, the whole city is an enormous bank in which one lives merely for the sake of making money. Go down to the port, walk into all the places where the crowd is densest: you will find everyone talking of money, and will fancy yourself in some immense office where all conversations are about figures. The important business is, when one

has ten francs in one's pocket, to turn them into twenty, thirty, forty. Those with large capital gamble at the Stock Exchange, buying and selling. But folks who only possess a few francs, have recourse to gaming; not having sufficient to engage in vast enterprises, they satisfy their craving by tempting chance; it is a means of gaining fortune or meeting ruin which is within everyone's grasp, a prompt and easy method, a new style of trade, full of keen emotions. The gambler is a speculator who lives a whole panting existence in a night, and experiences the hope, anxiety, and despair of a stock-jobber. In a city like Marseilles, where money reigns as sovereign king, where the inhabitants are under the influence of a terrible commercial fever, gambling becomes a necessity, a sort of bank open to all, in which each one, both rich and poor, can risk his coppers or his gold.

Add to this the fact that the wealthy, those who shovel gold about, who gain enormous sums in a day, set little value on that gold they pile up so easily. A workman looks with reverence at the five-franc piece which is paid him in the evening; he has toiled and moiled to earn the coin, it represents to him an exhausting labour, long hours of fatigue; and he has to live on it. But a trader, a stock-jobber who, whilst remaining seated in his office, finds at evening that he has gained several hundreds of francs, does not fear, when pocketing his profit, to let a few twenty-franc pieces fall to the ground. He knows that on the morrow he will no doubt earn as many more; he is still young, and wishes to enjoy life; as he has been shut in during several hours, he requires, in the evening, some noisy pleasures and strong emotions. So he squanders his money in the restaurants and cafés, and at the gaming-table, spending it as easily as he earned it.

A commercial city is therefore forcibly dissolute and given to gambling. In this ebb and flow of fortunes, in this scorching breath of trade which penetrates throughout every house, there are hours of madness, imperious needs for enjoyment. At certain times, these people are blinded by the dazzle of the gold: they plunge into debauchery

the same as they plunged into business. And the fever lays hold of the town from one end to the other, little and big, rich and poor, are agitated by the same emotion, the same need to lose or win gold, down to ruin or up to millions.

One can understand the existence of, I was almost saying the necessity for, gambling-houses at Marseilles. At the time of this story there were more than a hundred of them, and the number was increasing daily. The police were vanquished by the passion of the gamblers. Whenever a gambling-house was discovered and closed, two others were opened in its immediate neighbourhood. To cut off the evil at the root, it was necessary to remove the fever that was agitating the whole population. But to my mind the evil was irremediable: one may kill man, but not his passions.

The police, who have a direct action on gambling-houses, close all those they discover. But their action is difficult to apply in the clubs which, at times, become changed into veritable houses for gaming. Gamblers are inventive when it is a question of satisfying their passion; they endeavour to have the law on their side. Understand well, however, what I mean to say; I have no idea of attacking certain honourable clubs at Marseilles; I wish merely to be the historian of those scandalous clubs, frequented by sharpers and sometimes terribly stained by the blood of suicide.

This is how a club is founded. A few persons ask for an authorization to meet of an evening in a certain place, for the purposes of conversation and refreshment, and even to play at lawful games. Each member pays a subscription, and it is forbidden to admit strangers, that is to say to keep a gaming-table open to the public.

And now, this is what happens. After a few months, conversation and drinking cease, and whole nights are spent around the green baize; the stakes, at first very small, gradually increase in amount, so much so that it is easy to ruin oneself in a few nights. The management is no longer so strict, anyone is free to enter, there are more strangers in the club than members, even women

are admitted, sharpers soon put in an appearance for the purpose of fleecing inexperienced players, and this state of things lasts until the police make a raid and close the premises. Two months later the club re-opens some distance off, the farce is played over again with the same ending.

This is one of the open sores of Marseilles, a festering sore which spreads every day. The clubs have always a tendency to become gambling-houses, abysses which swallow up the fortunes and honour of those imprudent enough to venture therein. And once one has tasted the keen delights of play, all other pleasures seem to cloy; the fever seizes hold of one's whole being and the table claims the last coin in one's purse. Not a week goes by without some fresh disaster or complaint to the authorities.

One time it is merchants who have been ruining themselves at the gaming-tables. They come there and jeopardize the money deposited with them, first dissipating their own profits, and then breaking into the funds that have been entrusted to their commercial probity; after that they are obliged to go into bankruptcy, and they drag down in their ruin, those who have had faith in their honesty.

Another time it is small clerks with appetites for luxury and fast living, and whose modest salaries are insufficient for the gratification of their passions. They see around them wealthy people wallowing in the lap of luxury, surrounded by lovely women, reclining in carriages, in short tasting of all the dissolute joys of life; they are seized with jealousy, and feel a keen desire to lead a similar existence of pleasure and festivity. So they seek to obtain the necessary money at the gaming-table; they first of all risk their salaries; then, when luck is against them, they rob their employers, and enter upon a criminal career.

Then again there are young men, poor simple fellows fresh from college, who become the prey of skilful sharpers. If they win, they plunge into debauchery; if they lose, they fall into debt, give bills to usurers, and eat their corn in the ear.

The following characteristic story is told. A clerk, who

had been given a few thousand francs by his employer to pay the duty on some merchandise, went that evening to a club and lost the money with which he had been entrusted, at baccara. It was a temporary madness, the clerk being an honest fellow who had succumbed to the gambling fever. The employer threatened to make a complaint to the authorities. On hearing this, the members of the club, met together and decided to restore to the employer, out of their own pockets, the sum which his clerk had misappropriated. When they had paid up, the clerk signed a bill to the order of the cashier of the club, and the cashier has never insisted on the payment of this bill which the poor clerk was unable to meet.

Is not this kind action on the gamblers' part an admission? They understood that they were all jointly and severally guilty of the embezzlement, and they hushed up the affair so that the authorities should not come and disturb them in the gratification of their passion.

It was into this world stricken with madness, into this company of excited gamblers, that Sauvaire introduced Marius.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH MARIUS WINS TEN THOUSAND FRANCS.

THE Corneille Club was one of those authorized gambling hells that were referred to in the preceding chapter. In principle it should only have comprised members admitted by a majority of voices and paying a subscription of twenty-five francs; but, in reality, everyone could go there and gamble. At the commencement, to save appearances, they were in the habit of pasting a list of the newcomers up on the glass; or else strangers were obliged to give a card of introduction supplied by one of the members. Later on they had omitted to ask for the card and they had not taken the trouble to post up the names. Anyone could go there who liked.

Of course the master-stevedore was an upright man

incapable of committing a base action; but his life of pleasure had caused him to make strange friendships. He naïvely said that he preferred the society of rogues to that of straightforward people, for while the latter worried him the former made him laugh. He sought low society by instinct, because he could there unbutton himself at his ease, and amuse himself as he pleased, that is to say by making a frightful riot. Besides, with his affected air of a simple, easy man, he concealed extraordinary cunning and prudence: he never compromised himself, gambled little, and withdrew as soon as he ran the least danger. He was aware of the shady reputation of the majority of the frequenters of the Corneille Club, and he went there because he met with ladies who were the reverse of being straitlaced, and was able to satisfy his inclinations of an upstart.

Sauvaire and Marius, after ascending a narrow staircase, reached a spacious apartment on the first floor where a score of marble-topped tables were set out. Against the walls were divans covered with red velvet and in the centre rush-seated chairs: you might have imagined yourself in a café. At the end was a large table covered with green cloth on which two squares were marked out with red braid, and between these was a well for the cards that had been used. This was the gaming-table. It was surrounded by chairs.

Marius cast a bewildered look over the place on entering. He was suffocating, like a man who had just fallen into the water. Anyone, to look at him, might have thought that he had just come into a cavern where wild beasts were about to devour him. His heart was beating rapidly and his brow covered with perspiration. A sort of timidity mingled with repugnance kept him motionless, awkward, and gave him an embarrassed appearance.

There was hardly anyone in the room. A few men were drinking. Two women were conversing excitedly in a low tone in the corner. The gaming-table remained dark and unoccupied in the background, for the gas burners which descended in the centre of the green cloth had not yet been lit.

Marius regained his assurance little by little; but the fever continued raging in his veins.

"What will you take?" inquired Sauvaire.

"Whatever you like," answered the young man, in an off-hand way, staring at the table with curiosity and alarm.

The master-stevedore ordered beer. He extended himself full length on a divan and lit a cigar.

"Ah! There is Clairon, along with her friend Isnarde," he all at once exclaimed, perceiving the two girls talking in a corner. "Look what pearls of women they are! Eh! what say you? They are the sort of little creatures you require to drive away your troubles."

Marius looked at the girls. Clairon wore an old black velvet gown stained and frayed; she was short, dark, faded; her face, which was pale and covered with yellow spots, wore an air of weariness which was painful to look at. Isnarde, who was tall and thin, appeared still older and more worn out; it seemed as if her angular limbs would pierce through her faded silk gown at the shoulders. Marius was at a loss to understand Sauvaire's passionate admiration for these creatures. He turned away his head with an expression of disgust; Fine's healthy countenance had just appeared to him, and he felt ashamed at being in such a place.

The high key of Sauvaire's voice had made the two girls turn their heads and they began to laugh.

"Oh! they are buxom lasses," murmured the master-stevedore, "there's no mourning in their society. If you like we'll take them off with us to-night?"

"Aren't we going to play?" inquired Marius, sharply, interrupting his companion.

"Good heavens! What a hurry you are in!" answered Sauvaire, who stretched himself out still more to attract the girls' attention. "Of course we are going to play, we'll play until to-morrow morning if you like. But dash it, there's time enough for that. Just observe how Clairon and Isnarde are looking at me."

The frequenters of the place gradually came in. A waiter lit the gas, and several players went and seated themselves at the gaming-table. The two girls began to

move about the room, smiling on the men they knew; they ended by seating themselves near the banker who held the cards, hoping, no doubt, to glean a few twenty-franc pieces. Sauvaire then consented to approach the players.

Marius stayed for a moment standing, studying the game. He leant over to his companion and said:

"Kindly explain to me how I must act."

The master-stevedore was very much amused at the young man's naïveté.

"But, my good fellow," he answered, "nothing is easier. Where have you come from? Everyone knows baccara. Come here, sit down. Place your stake on this side or that, in one of these squares surrounded by a red band. You see the banker makes use of two packs of cards of different coloured backs and of fifty-two cards each; he deals two cards on each side and two to himself. The tens and picture cards do not count; the highest point is nine and it is necessary to get as near that as possible. If you have more than the banker, you win; if less, you lose. That's all."

"But," said Marius, "I see some of the players ask for a card."

"Yes," answered Sauvaire, "you are allowed to draw a card to arrange your hand. You often disarrange it. I advise you to always stand at six; it's a nice point."

Marius sat down at the table.

"Don't you play?" he inquired of Sauvaire.

"Faith, no," answered the master-stevedore. "I prefer having a laugh with Clairon."

And he got up and went hanging round the little brunette. The truth was that he was afraid of losing his cash. He found gambling ran away with such a lot of money. The excitement of winning and losing was too rapid for him: he wanted solid, lasting enjoyment.

The banker shuffled the cards.

"Make your game, gentlemen," he said.

Marius placed fifty francs on the cloth with a shudder. He had decided that he would play his hundred francs in two stakes.

Red light passed before his eyes; he heard a sort of

growling within him which made him feel giddy; his ears tinkled and his sight was troubled. The sensation he experienced was so violent that his heart almost ceased beating. "Nothing more goes!" said the banker.

And he dealt the cards. It was Marius' turn to take them. He picked them up and looked at them in a stupid way. He had five. He asked for cards and remained with four. The hands were thrown down. The banker had three. A murmur of astonishment passed round the table. Marius had won.

From that moment the young man was beside himself. He lived in a sort of dream. He remained there for more than five hours, downcast, overcome, sent half asleep by the monotony of the game, winning always, losing only to win still more. He played with an audacity that made the other gamblers tremble, and won contrary to every probability, clearing out the bankers one after the other.

Beside him was an elderly man who watched him with a stupefied and envious look. This person at length bent towards him and asked him in a low tone of voice:

"Sir, would you be so good as to tell me what your *mascotte* is?"

Marius did not hear him. A *mascotte* in the slang of Provençal gamblers, is a sort of talisman which shields the person who possesses it against ill-luck. All gamblers are more or less superstitious and each of them invents a little protecting divinity as a means of ensuring fortune.

The old gentleman seemed wounded at Marius' silence.

"I don't think I have been indiscreet," he continued; "I should have been curious to know what could possibly have given you such luck. I don't hide what I do. Here's my *mascotte*."

He took off his hat and displayed an image of the Virgin Mary inside of it. If Marius had been calm, he would have laughed; but he was enervated by several hours' play, and he made a movement of impatience, and continued to pile up the gold before him without uttering a single word.

Sauvaire, who was astounded at his companion's luck,

had placed himself behind his chair. He preferred to watch the game to playing himself. He enjoyed the sight of large sums of money spread out on the gaming-table when he did not run the risk of losing. Clairon and Isnarde had followed him and leant familiarly on the back of Marius' seat. They bent over towards the young man, smiled at him, fondled him with their eyes. The odour of gold had made them hasten forward like birds of prey.

Five o'clock struck. The pale daylight was streaming in at the windows. The gamblers went off one by one. Marius ended by finding himself alone. He had ten thousand francs in winnings before him.

The young man would have sat at the gaming-table until evening, until the following day, without being conscious of it, without complaining of the fatigue which was overpowering him. For more than five hours he had been playing mechanically, having but one idea in his head, that of winning, of always winning. He wanted to finish with it at a single stroke, to win the sum he required in one night, and not put his feet in the hell again.

When he found himself alone at the table, stupid, blind, his limbs aching with excitement and weariness, he was in despair, his eyes sought someone to go on playing with. He had just counted the money he had won, and he knew it only amounted to ten thousand francs.

He wanted five thousand francs more. He would have given anything in the world for day-light not to have appeared. Perhaps he might have had time to complete Philippe's ransom. And he was there, staring at his gold pieces, putting them slowly into his pocket, folding up the bank notes one by one, looking round the room for a belated gambler.

There was a man at a small table near him who had been watching the play all the evening, without risking anything himself. When he had seen Marius winning, he had approached and had not lost sight of him. He seemed to be waiting. He let the other gamblers go away one by one, fixing his eyes on the young man, following the fever that agitated him, lying in wait for him as for

a sure prey. When the latter, vexed and shivering, was making up his mind to leave, the stranger rose hurriedly and approached him.

"Sir," he inquired, "will you have a game at *écarté* with me?"

Marius was about to accept joyfully, when Sauvaire, who was following him step by step, seized him by the arm, and whispered:

"Don't play."

The young man turned round and threw an inquiring look on the master-stevedore.

"Don't play," the latter continued, "if you wish to keep the ten thousand francs you've got in your pocket. For the love of Providence, refuse and come quickly. You will thank me afterwards."

Marius had a good mind not to listen to Sauvaire; but the master-stevedore got him little by little near the door, and seeing him hesitate he undertook to speak for him.

"No, no, Monsieur Félix," he said to the man who was offering to play *écarté*, "my friend is tired, he can't stay any longer. Good day, Monsieur Félix."

M. Félix seemed very much annoyed at this answer. He stared fixedly at Sauvaire as if to say to him: "What the deuce are you meddling with?" Then he turned on his heels, whistled between his teeth and murmured:

"And so I've lost my night."

Sauvaire had not let go of Marius. When they were both in the street, the young man inquired of his companion in an irritated tone:

"Why did you prevent me playing?"

"Ah! Poor innocent," answered the master-stevedore, "because I took pity on you, because I didn't want M. Félix to win your ten thousand francs from you."

"That man's a rascal then?"

"Oh! no, he remains within the strictest limits of honesty."

"Then I should have won."

"No, you would have lost. The calculations of M. Félix are sure. This is how he proceeds. He never plays during the night. Towards morning, when the other

players are racked with fever, he addresses one of them and makes him seat himself at an *écarté* table. It is no longer a question of a game of chance, but of a game in which you need all your intelligence, and all your calm. M. Félix is calm and prudent; he has a head that is fresh and reposed; his adversary is feverish, blind, he does not even see his cards, and in a few deals he is stripped in the most straightforward fashion in the world."

"I understand and I thank you."

"M. Félix has already won quite a fortune by putting his system into practice every evening. But I repeat that he plays in a perfectly honourable manner, only he arranges things in such a way that his adversaries always play like perfect jackasses; and that is how clever people succeed. If I were in his place I'd take out a patent."

Marius remained silent. The two men had stopped in the middle of the deserted street opposite the entrance to the *Corneille Club*. It was wet, foggy weather, nasty odours hovered over the pavement, and there was a piercing chill in the matinal breeze. Buttoned up to their chins, both shivering, they reeled about like drunkards, their pale countenances and sparkless eyes telling the few passers-by, what sort of night they had just passed.

As Marius was about to go off, he felt an arm slipped in his. He turned and recognised *Isnarde*. *Clairon* had just taken *Sauvaire's* arm. The two women had not lost sight of these men who smelt of gold; they had followed them, ravenous at the thought of the ten thousand francs that Marius had on him, and determined to have their share of the amount. The young man appeared to them a simpleton whom they could master without difficulty and strip at their ease.

Isnarde burst into a laugh, and said, in a slightly groggy voice,

"Are you going to bed already, gentlemen?"

Marius rapidly withdrew his arm with an air of repugnance which he did not take the trouble to disguise.

"My loves," answered *Sauvaire*, "I am willing to stand you a breakfast. Eh! Promise me to be very amusing. Are you coming, Marius?"

"No," answered the young man, sharply.

"Ah! This gentleman is not coming," said Clairon, in a drawling voice. "Ah! That's a pity. He would have stood us champagne. He owes us at least that."

Marius felt in his pockets, pulled two handfuls of gold out of them and passed them to Clairon and Isnarde. The women pocketed the money without being in the least degree put out.

"Until to-night," said Marius.

"Until to-night," answered the master-stevedore.

He took one of the women on each arm and went off in that way, singing and creating a frightful disturbance in the quiet thoroughfare.

Marius watched him move away, and then proceeded to his peaceful little room in the Rue Sainte. It was six o'clock in the morning. He went to bed and slept like a top. He only awoke at two o'clock.

When he opened his eyes he perceived the money he had won. The reddish reflex running over the gold almost frightened him; all at once the night he had passed came back to him with singular distinctiveness, and he felt a formidable choking sensation in the throat. He was afraid of becoming a gambler, for his first thought on awakening was that he would return to the "hell" in the evening and would win again. At this idea a tremor passed through him, he became feverish and enjoyed a moment of voluptuous delight.

And he repeated to himself: "No, it is not true, I cannot be possessed of that horrible passion, I cannot have become a gambler from one day to another; I gamble to deliver Philippe, I don't play for myself." He did not dare interrogate himself further.

Then he thought of Fine, and he had to make an effort to restrain his sobs. He said to himself that he already had ten thousand francs and that he could dispense with returning to the gambling-house; assuredly he could easily find five thousand francs; he would not run the risk of losing what he had won.

He dressed himself and went out into the street. His head was bursting. He did not even think of going to his

office, he entered a restaurant but could not eat. Everything he saw seemed to be turning, and at times he felt a choking sensation as if he were all at once in want of breath. When night came he went, as a matter of course, step by step, to the Corneille Club.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW MARIUS HAD BLOOD ON HIS HANDS.

ON entering the room Marius perceived Sauvaire seated at a table between Clairon and Isnarde. The master-stevadore had not quitted the two girls since the morning. He rose, stepped forward and pressed the young man's hand.

"Ah! my friend," he said, "how wrong you were not to have come with us! We amused ourselves immensely. These charmers are so funny! They would make stones laugh. They are the sort of ladies I like!"

He dragged Marius to the table where Clairon and Isnarde were drinking beer. The young man sat down with a good deal of ill grace.

"Sir," said Isnarde to him, "would you like me to go into partnership with you to-night?"

"No," he answered, drily.

"He's quite right to refuse," cried Sauvaire, in a noisy voice. "You want to ruin him, my dear. You know the proverb: 'Lucky at cards, unlucky in love!'"

And he added in a low voice addressing his companion:

"Why don't you make friends with her? Don't you see the glances she is casting at you?"

Marius rose without answering and went and sat at the card table. A game was about to commence and he was impatient to return to the sensations of the previous night.

He wished to follow the same tactics. He placed fifty francs on the cloth and lost them; he put fifty others there, and lost them also.

Gamblers are justly fatalists, they know by experience that chance has its laws, like everything else in this world;

that it labours sometimes for a whole night to make a man's fortune, and that often, the next day, it works his ruin with the same persistence. A moment comes when chance turns, when a person who has won a long series of hands, loses another series that is quite as long. Marius had arrived at one of those terrible moments.

He lost five times in succession. Sauvaire, who had drawn near and was following his game, bent over him and said rapidly:

"Don't play to-night, you are not in luck. You will lose all you won yesterday."

The young man shrugged his shoulders impatiently. His throat became dry and the perspiration stood out on his forehead.

"Leave me alone," he answered sharply, "I know what I am doing. I want all or nothing."

"As you please," replied the master-stevedore. "I have gained some experience during the ten years I have been playing and watching others play. In a few hours, my good fellow, you will not have a sou left. It always happens like that."

He took a chair and sat down behind Marius, wishing to be present when his predictions were realized. Clairon and Isnarde, who hoped to gather up a few pieces of gold, as on the previous day, also came and placed themselves near the young man. They laughed, gave themselves airs, and Sauvaire, from time to time, joked noisily with them. The bursts of laughter and tittering which Marius heard behind him exasperated him. He was on the point of turning round two or three times to send Sauvaire and the girls to the Prince of Darkness. In despair at losing, enervated by the strange and terrible hands that chance gave him, he felt his anger rising within him and would have been glad to vent it on someone.

He had played at first as on the previous night, with audacity and decision, risking hands of five and relying on his good luck; but that luck had gone, his audacity did not serve him. Then he wanted to act prudently; he dodged chance, calculated the probabilities, and finally played cleverly. He lost just as often as before. On

several occasions he had eight and the banker nine. Fortune seemed to take bitter pleasure in stripping him on whom she had showered her favours. It was indeed a fight to the death, and at each fresh attack, at each hand of cards, Marius was vanquished. At the expiration of an hour he had already lost four thousand francs.

Sauvaire kept singing out behind him:

"What did I say? I was certain of it!"

And Clairon and Isnarde, who saw the bits of gold on which they relied disappearing, began to make fun of the young man and to look about for someone more lucky.

Marius bewildered in front of the gulf open before him, turned towards Sauvaire and said to him in a choking voice:

"You who know how to play, tell me what to do."

"Oh!" answered the master-stevedore, "if you were to play like an angel you would lose. Chance is blind, it goes, you see, where it likes, one can never direct it. You had better withdraw."

"No, no, I'll see it out."

"Well then! Let us try. Play the series."

Marius played the series. Hand on hand he lost five hundred francs.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Sauvaire. "Play intermission then."

Marius played intermission and lost again.

"I warned you, I warned you," repeated the master-stevedore, "Try a martingale."

Marius tried a martingale and had no better luck.

"It's enough to drive one mad," he exclaimed in anger.

"Don't play any more," said Sauvaire.

"Yes, I will play, I'll play to the end."

The master-stevedore rose, whistling between his teeth. He could not understand his friend's nervous obstinacy, he who never risked more than a hundred francs on the green cloth.

"Look here!" he continued, "the banker has thrown up his hand and is leaving. Take his place. That will perhaps change the luck."

Marius took the banker's seat. He paid two francs for

cards and slipped a franc into the slot in accordance with the custom of the club. He shuffled the cards and then presented them to the players, saying:

"Gentlemen, the cards pass."

Some of the players shuffled the cards again and returned them to Marius, who shuffled them a third time as was his right. The game began again. The young man could now lose all he had in a few hands.

He lost twice running. Sauvaire continued to remain behind him. He ended by taking an interest in this intrepid youth. The latter was about to deal the cards again to the players, to the punters as they are called, when the master-stevedore stopped his arm and leaning over to his ear, said to him in a low voice:

"Take care, they are robbing you. You are dealing the cards like a young innocent."

"How do you mean?"

"Yes, you hold them up as you deal them, so that the punters opposite see them pass and know what you have in your hand. All new bankers are victimized like that. Keep the pack slanting in your hand and lower the cards as you deal them out."

Marius followed this wise advice and did very well. He won. In a few hands he had got back a fairly large sum. Then chance turned again and he lost. Next a sort of equilibrium was established between his winning and losings. Little by little, however, he felt the ten thousand francs slipping through his fingers.

He neglected nothing to make his luck change. On several occasions he stopped and called for fresh cards. At another time he dealt his hand right out, in order to lead chance astray and bring it back to him.

But all these tactics did him no good. Fortune now seemed to take pleasure in playing with its prey, in making it suffer longer and not killing it at one blow; then, all at once, she scratched it, she took away what she had just given and even more.

Sauvaire kept watch round the table, so as to see that his friend was not cheated too much. The latter had a man opposite him who was still young and who although

playing for small stakes must already have won a good round sum; each time the cards were favourable to him his stake was twenty-five francs, and each time he lost he had only a silver five-franc piece before him, which was a *mascotte*, he said, and he paid with another coin.

The master-stevedore looked on this man with distrust. He watched his movements and perceived that he concealed a twenty-franc gold piece under his five-franc piece in silver; when he won he displayed it all and pocketed twenty-five francs; when he lost he left the gold coin hidden under the large silver piece and only gave Marius five francs. It seems that not a night passes without this clever robbery being practised in one of the gambling-houses at Marseilles.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," murmured Sauvaire, "I'll nail you, my gentleman."

In the hand that followed, Marius won. The cheat was preparing to give him five francs in change, when Sauvaire stretched out his arm gave a flip to the five-franc piece and uncovered the gold coin beneath it.

"You are cheating, sir," he exclaimed, "out you go!"

The rascal did not lose countenance.

"What are you meddling with?" he answered, insolently.

He left his twenty-five francs on the table, rose, took a few turns in the room and withdrew without molestation. The punters had limited themselves to growling.

Marius turned very pale. He had fallen, then, so low as that, he was playing with thieves. From that moment there was a cloud before his eyes which made him commit the grossest blunders. He lost and was almost happy to lose. All the fever had left him, he no longer had the uncomfortable feeling in his throat. The money when he touched it was burning hot; he would have liked to have lost the whole of it and to have gone away with empty pockets.

Soon he had no more than two or three hundred francs before him.

Since the commencement of the evening he had had a young man beside him who had followed all the changes of fortune with lively anxiety. As he lost, he became

more pale and haggard. He had begun with a considerable sum before him and gazed in despair on each piece of gold as it was swept away. Marius had heard him more than once utter disjointed words and had felt anxious about him. He could see that a frightful drama was being performed at his elbow.

A final stroke completed his neighbour's ruin. He remained for a moment motionless, with contracted features. Then he placed a hand over his eyes, drew a pistol rapidly from his pocket, placed the barrel in his mouth, and fired.

There was a sound like the crack of a whip. The blood spurted out and large warm crimson drops fell on Marius' hands.

All the players had risen in a fright. The body had just fallen on the table, the arms folded, the head hanging down. The bullet after piercing the neck had come out on the right below the ear, and there was a red hole there, from which ran a stream of blood. A pool of gore was formed on the green cloth; and, in this pool, the abandoned cards were soaking.

Alarming sentences, uttered in undertones, passed among the gamblers.

"Do you know the poor fellow?"

"I think it's a collector of Lambert & Co."

"His family is honourable. His brother purchased a solicitor's practice six months ago."

"He must have embezzled a large sum and killed himself when he lost it."

"Anyhow he might have shot himself somewhere else. The police will be here in twenty minutes and close the club."

"These people who have a mania for killing themselves are most annoying. We were very well here, we could gamble at ease. Now we must move."

"Have they sent to inform the police commissary?"

"Yes."

"I'm off."

There was a general stampede. The players seized their hats and prudently slipped out on to the landing. One

could hear them stumbling downstairs like drunkards.

Marius had remained seated beside the corpse. He could not move hand or foot. He sat looking in a stupid way at the suicide's red neck and the splashes of blood covering his own hands. His hair stood on end, sparks of madness flashed in his eyes which were almost starting out of his head. He still held the pack of cards. All at once he threw them down, shook his hands violently, as if to get rid of the blood that was running between his fingers, and uttering a harsh cry, fled.

He did not even pick up the few hundreds of francs that were before him. The pool increased little by little, and the bits of gold now seemed bathed in a stream of blood.

Only the corpse and the two girls remained in the room. Sauvaire had been one of the first to fly. When Clairon and Isnarde found themselves alone they approached the table attracted by the gold glittering in the blood.

"Let's divide," said Isnarde.

"Yes, let's be quick," answered Clairon, "it's no good giving the police the money."

And each of them took a handful of gold from the middle of the crimson pool. The coins stained with gore disappeared in their pockets; then they wiped their fingers on their handkerchiefs and in their turn fled, gasping for breath and fancying they heard the voice of the police commissary behind them.

It was three o'clock in the morning. Great gusts of wind were driving along the big, dark clouds that studded the grey sky with black. A sort of mist floated in the air and fell in fine, icy cold rain. There is nothing more mournful than those hours of the early morning in a great city: the streets are dirty, the houses stand out in sad silhouettes.

Marius ran like a madman through the silent and deserted streets. He slipped on the greasy stones, dipping his feet in the gutters, and knocking up against the corners of the pavement. And he continued running with his arms extended before him, wringing his hands in furious rage. He wanted to go and dip them in the sea

and wash them with all the water of the ocean. There only, could he find relief for the terrible burn that was devouring him.

He ran, alarmed and fierce, still wringing his hands and taking out-of-the-way streets like a murderer. At moments he was half mad; he imagined it was he who had killed the suicide to rob him of fifteen thousand francs. Then he heard the heavy tread of the gendarmes behind him, he hastened the pace, not knowing where to hide his hands which would bear witness against him.

He had to cross the Cours Belzunce. Workmen were passing along under the trees, and he experienced most horrible anguish. To avoid descending to the harbour by the Cannebière, he plunged into the old town. There the streets are dark and narrow and no one could see his blood-stained hands.

He reached the Place aux Œufs. It was only then that he thought of Fine, he remembered all at once that she was maternal, that she might already be on the Place and would see him covered with blood. She would question him and he would be unable to answer her. He knew nothing, all was confusion in his head, he found himself lost in a nightmare. His hands burned him, that was all, and he continued running; ran to go and plunge them in the sea and extinguish the coals clinging to his flesh.

He descended the narrow streets, the steep inclines, at the risk of breaking his head twenty times over. Twice he slipped and fell; each time he rose with a bound and continued his race.

At length, he perceived the black masses of vessels lying silent in the dense water of the Port. He ran along the white, polished slabs of stone; and as he could find no boat, he for an instant had the insane idea of flinging himself into the water, and thus appeasing his sufferings at a single stroke. The burns he thought he felt, became intolerable. He yelled and wept.

But having at last found a little pleasure-craft fastened at the edge of the quay, he leapt into it, lay down on his stomach and feverishly plunged his arms into the sea up to the shoulders.

A profound sigh of relief escaped him. The cool water appeased his fever, the wavelets washed away the blood that was gnawing into his hands.

He remained lying thus for a long time, forgetting all, not even remembering why he was there. Every now and then he drew his arms out of the water and furiously rubbed his hands, looked at them and rubbed them again. He seemed always to perceive large red spots on his skin. Then he plunged his arms into the sea again, made the water move gently to and fro, enjoying intense delight at the sensation of the cold seizing him and sending a shiver all over his body.

At the end of an hour, he was still there, thinking there would never be sufficient water in the sea to wash his hands. However, little by little, his ideas became calm and his head heavy. It seemed as if his brain were empty. Icy shivers ran over all his limbs. Mechanically, step by step, he reached the Rue Sainte, without thinking of anything. He no longer knew where he had come from, nor what he had done. He went to bed and was seized with a terrible fever.

CHAPTER XVI.

MADEMOISELLE CLAIRE'S PRAYER-BOOK.

MARIUS remained three weeks in bed a prey to violent delirium. He had an attack of acute cerebral fever which brought him to death's door. His youth, and the tender attention he received, saved him.

One evening, at twilight, he opened his eyes with a clear head. It seemed to him that he had issued from profound darkness. He was so weak that he had no feeling in his body; but the fever had disappeared, and his thoughts, which were still vacillating, returned to him.

The curtains were drawn round his bed. A soft, warm light came through the white linen and surrounded him with gentle brightness. The air of the silent room was pervaded with perfume. He raised himself. And at the

slight noise he made, he saw a shadow glide behind the curtains.

"Who is there?" he inquired, in a voice that was hardly distinct.

A hand quietly drew aside the curtains, and Fine, seeing Marius sitting up, exclaimed joyfully:

"Heaven be praised! You are saved, my friend."

And she began to weep. The invalid understood all, and extended his poor thin hands towards the girl.

"Thanks," he said to her, "I knew you were there. I feel as if I had had a frightful dream; and, I remember now, in the midst of that dream, I saw you bending over me like a mother."

He let his head fall on the pillow and continued in a childish voice:

"I have been very ill, have I not?"

"All is over, do not let us think of such disagreeable things," said the flower-girl gaily. "But where had you been to, my friend, the sleeves of your coat were all wet?"

Marius passed his hand across his forehead.

"Oh! I remember," he exclaimed, "it's frightful!"

Then he gave Fine an account of the two terrible nights he had passed in the gambling-house. He made her a confession, retracing in detail all he had suffered.

"It's a terrible lesson," he remarked, in conclusion. "I doubted and turned to chance. For a moment I shuddered. I fancied I felt all the instincts of the gambler within me. But I've been cured with a red-hot iron."

He stopped and then continued anxiously:

"How long have I been ill?"

"About three weeks," answered Fine.

"Oh! Heavens! Three weeks lost. We have only about twenty days before us."

"Do not trouble about that, but get well."

"Hasn't M. Martelly sent to inquire about me?"

"Don't worry yourself, I tell you. I have been to see him and everything is arranged."

Marius seemed more calm and Fine continued:

"There is only one course to follow, and that is to borrow money of M. Martelly. We should have commenced

by that. All will be well. Now, sleep, do not speak; the doctor has forbidden it."

The convalescence advanced at rapid strides, thanks to Fine's tender and devoted care. The young girl understood that her smile would now suffice to cure Marius, and each morning, she came with that and her fresh breath which filled the little room with a puff of spring.

"Ah! how nice it is to be ill!" the invalid often repeated.

The two lovers passed a charming week in this way. Their love had increased, amidst the suffering and dread of death. A new bond united them. Henceforth they were one.

When, at the expiration of a week of gay and touching intimacy, Marius was able to get downstairs and go for a short walk in the sun on the Cours Bonaparte, he and Fine were taken for two lovers on the morrow of their betrothal. They had been affianced in the midst of devotedness and grief. Now, as they walked along slowly, the flower-girl supported the young man, who was still weak, and gazed at him with bewitching eyes. She was proud of her work, proud at her lover's recovery, and he thanked her with smiles full of passionate gratitude.

The next day, the clerk wished to go back to his office, and Fine had to get angry to make him remain at home a day or two longer. He was impatient to see M. Martelly; he desired to feel the ground and ascertain if he could rely on the ship-owner.

"But there is no hurry," said the flower-girl, with a calmness that astounded the young man. "We have a whole week before us. It will suffice if we have the money at the last moment."

At the end of two days Marius obtained the young girl's permission to return to his work, and it was arranged between them that they would leave for Aix on the following Monday. Fine spoke as if she had the amount necessary for Philippe's liberty in her pocket.

Marius went to his office and was received by M. Martelly with paternal kindness. The ship-owner wanted to give him another week's holiday, but the young man

assured him that work would complete his convalescence. He felt ashamed in his presence, he was thinking that in two or three days he would be making an effort to borrow a large sum of money from him and that thought troubled him, moreover M. Martelly gazed at him with a piercing look that quite embarrassed him.

"I have seen Mademoiselle Fine," said the ship-owner accompanying him to his office, "she is a charming person, a noble heart. Be very fond of her, my friend."

He smiled again and withdrew. When Marius was alone he experienced inestimable delight at finding himself in the small office where he had lived and worked so long. He again took possession of his little domain, found pleasure in seating himself before his table, in touching the papers and pens lying there. He had been almost dead and he was once more face to face with his daily placid existence.

The room in which he was working, was opposite the ship-owner's private apartments and sometimes visitors made a mistake and knocked at his door. On that particular morning as he was about to get to work, he heard two discreet knocks and shouted to come in.

A man dressed in a long black frock coat made his appearance. His face was shaven, his manner was gentle and he had all the humble and sneaking demeanour of a person connected with the Roman Catholic Church.

"Mademoiselle Claire Martelly?" he inquired.

Marius, who was occupied in examining him, did not answer: he was wondering where on earth he had seen this devout personage before. The man was hesitating, but he at last pulled a prayer-book confined in a case, out of the immense pockets of his overcoat.

"I have brought her," he continued, in a fluty voice, "her prayer-book, which she forgot yesterday evening in a confessional."

Marius continued wondering: "Where on earth have I seen the face of that canting rascal?" The man no doubt understood the mute interrogation of his look. He bent his head slightly, adding:

"I am the beadle at the Church of St. Victor."

These few words were like a beam of light for the young man. He remembered having seen the individual before him in the vestry-room, on one occasion when he went to fetch Abbé Chastanier. His intelligence received a sort of shock that stimulated it, and urged on by the power of divination, as it were, he said:

"It was M. Donadéi who sent you, was it not?"

"Yes" answered the beadle, after further hesitation.

"Very good! give me the prayer-book. I will hand it to Mademoiselle Claire."

"But the abbé particularly told me I was to give it to no one but the young lady."

"She shall have it in a moment. Perhaps she is not up yet: you will be disturbing her."

"You promise me to do the errand?"

"Certainly."

"Tell the young lady that the abbé found this prayer-book in his confessional yesterday, and told me to bring it to her. The abbé sends his compliments to Mademoiselle."

"I will tell her all that, rest assured."

The beadle placed the prayer-book on the table and withdrew after making a bow. But in closing the door he hesitated again and looked distrustful.

When he had at last gone, Marius could not help feeling surprised at his persistence in wishing to see Mademoiselle Claire himself. He vaguely remembered the praises Donadéi had bestowed on M. Martelly's young sister. He looked at the prayer-book and his thoughts were busy with all kinds of reasonings and explanations.

He stretched out his arm and took the prayer-book. He drew it from its case. It was one of those bulky volumes, almost square, with a handsome binding and corners in open silver-work. The initials of the young girl were interlaced on one of the sides.

As Marius contemplated the book and turned it over in his hands, he perceived a thin piece of paper peeping out from the gilt edges. Prompted by a feeling of curiosity which he did not seek to explain, he opened the volume and a sheet of paper, folded in four, slipped out of it before him.

It was a pretty sheet of pink paper exhaling a slight smell of incense. Marius was about to return it to the book, but as he took it up he saw it was marked with the initial D and a cross in relief. He rapidly unfolded it and read as follows:

“Dear Soul, you whose salvation has been entrusted to me by the Lord, listen, I beg of you, to the scheme I have formed for your eternal happiness. I have never dared explain that scheme to you, verbally, fearing to give way to the adorable emotions that your righteousness creates within me.

“You cannot remain any longer in your brother’s house. It is a place of perdition; your brother is devoted to the abominable worship of modern idols. Come, come with me. We will find a solitary spot where I will place you in the hands of the Almighty.

“Perhaps my tears and trembling, have made you penetrate the secret of my heart. I love you as the Holy Church, our mother, loves the pure souls that come to her. I dream of you each night, I see you entwined in a celestial embrace, and we both rise to heaven exchanging angelic kisses.

“Ah! do not resist the voice that is calling you. Come. There is a superior religion which we do not reveal to the vulgar. That religion unites creatures together. It makes spouses, not martyrs.

“Bear in mind our conversations. Say to yourself that I love you, and come. I await you at my house. I shall have a post-chaise in an adjoining street.”

Marius was astounded after reading this. Abbé Donadéi actually suggested an elopement to Mademoiselle Claire. It is true his letter was pervaded with incense, with rakish, cloudy mysticism, which hid the brutal meaning of his thoughts beneath the devout and fondling sweetness of words; the sense was paraphrased, diluted in that odd style of expression which some Roman Catholic priests affect, but Abbé Donadéi had not been able to find a religious periphrasis for the post-chaise, and his hypocritical letter ended coarsely, by a gendarme-like offer which no one could misinterpret. The graceful abbé,

to have cast aside the sly prudence that guided him in all his acts, must have been carried away by fierce desire.

The clerk read and re-read the letter, asking himself what he had better do. He felt indignant, his anger rose within him. But one anxiety restrained him. He was ignorant as to the harm that had been done, he did not know what Mademoiselle Claire thought, and he was afraid lest Donadéi, in the mysterious seclusion of the confessional, had not already succeeded in troubling the young girl's heart. Before striking the priest he wanted to be sure that he would not, at the same time, strike his victim. For nothing in the world would he have run the risk of creating a scandal that would certainly have killed M. Martelly.

He resolved that if the abbé were to be the only one to suffer, to punish him in an original way. He took the prayer-book and went to Mademoiselle Claire in great alarm lest her face should display incriminating emotion.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH SAUVAIRE MAKES UP HIS MIND TO HAVE HIS MONEY'S WORTH OF FUN.

MADemoiselle CLAIRE MARTELLY was a tall, handsome girl of twenty-three, whom circumstances had thrown into devotion. She was to have married one of her cousins, who was accidentally drowned at Endoume during a pleasure trip. Despair had brought her nearer to God, and, little by little, she had tasted such sweetness in frequenting churches that she had fallen asleep, as it were, in the penetrating perfume of the incense, soothed by the murmuring voices of the priests.

Hers was not precisely a religious mind, it was a gentle and contemplative one, which religion had consoled, and which was grateful on that account. Perhaps, one of these days, there might be an awakening and she would return to the joys of the world. In the meanwhile she lived a rather retired, calm life, and her tastes were simple. Her

brother, who was a free-thinker and a Republican, of broad intellect and a kindly nature, allowed her to do as she pleased. He only took advantage of his position as head of the family, to protect her interests and assure her an independent position.

Marius found Mademoiselle Claire in a small drawing-room where she generally worked at baby-linen which she gave away to the poor. The young girl knew Marius and treated him affectionately, as a friend of the family. M. Martelly had often taken his clerk with him to an estate he owned near Estaque, and there Marius and Claire had become good friends. Brave hearts find each other out and are not long in coming to an understanding.

The beautiful devout on seeing the clerk enter, jumped up and held out her hand to him.

"Ah! It's you, Marius," she exclaimed gaily. "So you're well again. So much the better. Heaven has granted my prayer."

The young man felt very much touched at this friendly welcome. He gazed in the young girl's eyes and found naught there but a pure flame and a look of calm virginity. That look appeared to him so tranquil and straightforward, that he felt as if relieved of a lump that had been choking him.

"I thank you," he answered. "But I have not come to show you a ghost."

And handing her the prayer-book, he added:

"Here is a mass-book which it appears you left behind you yesterday at Saint-Victor."

"Ah! yes," said the young girl. "I was going to send and fetch it. How did it come into your hands?"

"A beadle just brought it."

"A beadle!"

"Yes, from Abbé Donadéi."

Claire took the book and placed it quietly on a piece of furniture without showing the least concern. Marius followed her anxiously with his eyes. If the slightest colour had risen to her cheeks, he would have thought all lost.

"By the way," continued the young girl, sitting down, "I think you know M. Chastanier."

"Yes," answered Marius astonished.

"He is an excellent man, is he not?"

"Certainly, he has a good heart and a profoundly pious and upright mind."

"My brother has sung his praises to me loudly; but in religious matters, you know, I do not place unlimited confidence in my brother."

She smiled. Marius could not understand what she was coming to; only he found her so quiet and happy that he felt entirely reassured.

"I see Abbé Chastanier is a positive saint," she continued, "and from to-morrow I shall entrust him with the care of directing my conscience."

"Are you going to leave Abbé Donadéi?" exclaimed Marius, warmly.

The young girl again raised her head, surprised at the clerk's tone of voice.

"Yes, I am leaving him," she answered, very simply. "He is young and has the light mind of an Italian. Besides, I have learnt ugly things about him."

She continued stitching quietly with her needle, there was not a tremor in her hands and her forehead remained white and pure. Then Marius withdrew, convinced that he could act without wounding this virgin conscience, and that while punishing Donadéi, he would punish him only. He did not know the real cause that had decided Claire to change her confessor; perhaps she had understood that she was no longer in safety in the hands of the gallant abbé; but, in any case, there had been no act or word at which she had cause to blush.

Marius had preserved the soft pink paper containing Donadéi's declaration. He could have simply taken it to the Bishop of Marseilles, but he preferred to punish and deride the abbé himself, in return for his having impudently made fun of him when he had sought to recommend Philippe to his kindness. His plan was formed. Only to put it into execution, he required the assistance of Sauvaire.

He did not return to his office after lunch, but went in search of the master-stevedore in all the cafés. Sauvaire

was not to be found. He then made up his mind to go and ask Cadet Cougourdan if he knew where his principal was in hiding.

"Oh! He is not hiding himself, that's not his habit," answered Cadet laughing. "He must be in a restaurant at the Réserve, and I'll bet he's trying to show himself to all Marseilles."

Marius went down to the Port and was rowed to the Réserve in one of those small pleasure boats supplied with a spare red-and-yellow striped awning. The boat glided slowly over the dense water of the harbour, amidst refuse of all sorts, orange peel, vegetable remains, objects without a name which were gathered together in a sort of whitish froth. And it continued on its way in the middle of a passage preserved between the vessels, skimming along in proximity to their dark sides. It was as if lost in a forest which shot up, on all sides, its straight, slender stems, each surmounted by a shred of crimson bunting.

Before Marius had landed he could hear the noisy laughter of Sauvaire seated at a table on a terrace of a restaurant. He could not be seen, but he arranged matters so as to make known he was there.

The restaurants at the Réserve resemble those at Asnières and Saint Cloud: they are chalets, pavilions, all kinds of ugly architectural conceptions. As a matter of fact they are built of plaster and planks, and the blasts of wind threaten to blow them out to sea. Sauvaire delighted in frequenting these restaurants because the charges there are very high, and one can be seen a long way off.

Marius, guided by the master-stevedore's elevated voice, found him at once. He was on a terrace with Clairon and Isnarde whom he no longer left: he was convinced he had the appearance of being more wealthy when dragging two women along with him, one on each arm. The terrace trembled beneath the storm of Sauvaire's gaiety. Moreover, the worthy man was getting slightly tipsy.

"Bravo, bravo!" he shouted, perceiving Marius, "we will begin lunching again. We have been lunching since noon. We have eaten cockles, bouillabaisse, tunny——"

He continued and enumerated a dozen dishes with

childlike pride. He felt quite flattered at having given himself indigestion.

"Heh!" he continued, "one is very comfortable here. It's expensive, but everything is very correct. What will you have to eat?"

Marius excused himself, pointing out that it was three o'clock and that he had lunched long before.

"Go along with you! One can always eat," exclaimed Sauvaire, delighted at being caught at such a rakish pleasure party. "We are going on eating like this until evening. It'll cost money, but so much the worse! Clairon, my girl, you'll get drunk if you take so much champagne."

Clairon paid no attention to the remark and swallowed another large glass. Besides, she had nothing to fear as she was tipsy already.

"Good heavens! How amusing these women are!" continued Sauvaire rising and fanning himself with his napkin.

He went towards the balustrade on the terrace and shouted out very loud, so as to be heard by the passers-by:

"I've already spent a great deal of money with them, but I don't regret it, they're so comical!"

Marius leant over towards him.

"Do you want to have a good evening to-morrow?" he asked him.

"Of course, I do," answered Sauvaire.

"It will cost you a few louis."

"The deuce! Will it be very funny?"

"Very funny indeed. You shall have your money's worth of laughter."

"I accept then."

"All Marseilles will hear of the affair, and they'll be talking of you for a week afterwards."

"I accept, I accept."

"Very well, listen."

Marius bent down to Sauvaire's ear and spoke to him in a low voice. He explained his plan. An instant later the master-stevedore burst into a fit of laughter that almost choked him. He thought the thing funny, very funny.

"That's agreed," he said, when Marius had told him

his secret. "I will be on the Boulevard de la Corderie with Clairon to-morrow evening at ten o'clock. Ah! What a good joke!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW ABBÉ DONADÉI ELOPED WITH THE SISTER SOUL TO HIS OWN.

ABBÉ DONADÉI had allowed himself to be overcome by one of those violent desires which sometimes burst out in cunning, sneaking natures. He so clever, so prudent, had been guilty of a clumsy mistake. He was conscious of it when the beadle had left with the prayer-book and love-letter. From that moment he must be prepared to meet all the consequences of his audacious act. Claire had excited a yearning in him which he meant to satisfy in spite of all. He was beyond the sacred scruples of his calling. He looked on things human from too lofty a height, he had mixed in too many jobs of a more or less honourable nature, to hesitate at a seduction. That was the least thing that troubled him. It was the sequel to the seduction, at which he felt alarmed.

For two long months he had tried to attract the young girl to his house. Then, as she was about to accede to his wish in all simplicity, he had renounced that plan, convinced that an intrigue of this nature could not be carried on in the midst of Marseilles. It was thus that he had little by little reached the point of wishing to play all for all, like a daring gambler; his passion was increasing and torturing him and he was ready to exchange his influential position for a woman's free and entire love: he preferred to elope with Claire openly, and fly with her to Italy.

Donadéi was too sharp and intelligent not to have thought of a retreat. If the young girl in the long run had been in his way, he would have shut her up in a convent and obtained the forgiveness of his uncle the Cardinal. When he had examined and calculated everything, an elopement seemed to him the most easy and prompt

of all plans and the one which presented the least danger.

He only feared one thing: that Claire would not keep the appointment and would refuse to run away with him. Then, the love-letter would become a terrible arm. He would be without the girl and might lose his position. But he was blinded by desire, he did not notice the calm candour of his penitent, but took the acts of adoration addressed to the Almighty for so many mute avowals made to himself.

However, he had still fears, and regretted having advanced too far to be able to retreat. All his prudence and cowardice returned to him, and he impatiently awaited the beadle's return. As soon as he caught sight of him he exclaimed:

"Well?"

"I gave the book," answered the beadle.

"To the young lady herself?"

"Yes, to the young lady."

The beadle made this answer with superb self-possession. On his way back he regretted having given Marius the prayer-book, and, as he saw that he had performed his errand very badly, he determined to lie in order to deserve the abbé's good will.

Donadéi felt somewhat reassured. He judged that if the young girl felt offended at the note, she would burn it. Hazard, forgetting a prayer-book, had hastened a solution that he had been seeking so long. He had now only to wait.

The next morning, he received the visit of a veiled lady whose features he was unable to distinguish. This person handed him a letter and promptly withdrew. The missive only contained these words: "Yes, to-night!" Donadéi was beside himself with delight, and set about making his preparations for departure.

If anyone had followed the veiled lady, they would have seen her join the gallant Sauvaire who was awaiting her in the Rue du Petit Chantier. She raised her veil: it was Clairon.

"He's a very nice fellow that abbé," she said, on reaching the master-stevedore.

"Does he please you? So much the better!" answered Sauvaire. And they went off bursting with laughter.

At about half-past nine in the evening, Clairon and Sauvaire were again in the Rue du Petit Chantier. They walked slowly, stopping at each step as if waiting for someone. Clairon, who was dressed simply in a black woollen gown, had her face hidden beneath a thick veil. Sauvaire was disguised as a commissionaire.

"Here's Marius," the latter suddenly exclaimed.

"Are you ready?" inquired the young man in an undertone, as soon as he was close to them. "Do you know your parts well?"

"Of course!" answered the master-stevedore. "You'll see how we can act. Ah! the good joke! I shall be laughing over it for the next six months."

"Go on to the abbé's, we will wait for you here. Be prudent."

Sauvaire went and knocked at Donadéi's door. It was opened by the abbé himself who was attired in a travelling suit and seemed very excited.

"What do you want?" he inquired roughly, disappointed at seeing a man before him.

"I have come with a young lady," answered the sham commissionaire.

"Good, let her come in quickly."

"She would not come up to the door."

"Ah!"

"She said like this: 'Tell the gentleman that I prefer going straight to the carriage.'"

"Wait a minute. I have something to take with me."

"Yes, but you see the young lady is afraid, standing in the middle of the Boulevard."

"Then run quick and tell her that the post-chaise is at the corner of the Rue des Tyrans. Let her get in. I shall be there in five minutes."

Donadéi banged the door to, and Sauvaire held his sides and almost split with silent laughter. This adventure beat everything he had ever heard of.

He returned to the Rue du Petit Chantier, where Clairon and Marius were awaiting him.

"Everything is proceeding marvellously well," he said to them in an undertone, "the abbé falls into the trap with angelic innocence. I know where the post-chaise is."

"I noticed it coming along," said Marius, "it is at the corner of the Rue des Tyrans."

"That's it, there is not a moment to spare, the abbé has promised to be there in five minutes."

All three set off along the Boulevard de la Corderie, as far as the Rue des Tyrans, skirting the houses. There they perceived the post-chaise standing in the shade, all loaded and ready to start at the first crack of the whip. Marius and Sauvaire hid themselves under the archway of a great door. Clairon stood before them in the road.

Sauvaire and Clairon joked in a low voice while awaiting the abbé.

"Pooh! He will not care for me," said Clairon. "He will cast me off at the first change of horses."

"Who knows?"

"He's very nice. I was afraid he would be old."

"But, I say, you seem in love with the abbé. Oh! I'm not jealous. Only if you're going off so willingly with him, you might return me the thousand francs I gave you to persuade you to assist us."

"The thousand francs! Oh! indeed, and if he suddenly leaves me, must not I pay for my journey back?"

"I was joking, my dear, I don't take back what I have given. Besides, I'm having my money's worth of laughter."

Marius intervened, repeating his instructions to Clairon.

"Do exactly as I told you," he said. "Try to arrange so that he does not discover the trick until he is some leagues from Marseilles. Do not speak, play your part with art. When he has discovered everything, act firmly, tell him I have his note and am determined to take it to the bishop, if you suffer the least harm, or if he shows himself again here. Advise him to go and seek fortune elsewhere."

"Can I return at once to Marseilles?" inquired Clairon.

"Certainly. I only want to drive him from the city by making him ridiculous for ever. I could have had him

expelled from the church by his superiors, but I prefer annihilating him by mockery."

Sauvaire was splitting with laughter at the thought of the scene between Abbé Donadéi and Clairon.

"Eh! my dear," he continued, "tell him you are married and that your husband will no doubt be seeking you everywhere to prosecute you for your misconduct. Shall I run after you, and put your ravisher in a horrible fright?"

The idea of this joke so amused Sauvaire that he very nearly choked with hilarity. In the meanwhile Marius had noticed a dark form advancing rapidly towards them.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "Here, I think, is our man. Attend to your part, Clairon. Place yourself in front of the carriage door."

Sauvaire and Marius secreted themselves more closely in their hiding-place, and Clairon, with her face thickly veiled and dressed all in black, stood in the shadow thrown by the post-chaise. It was Donadéi, quite out of breath. He had thrown off the cowl and looked very smart in ordinary mufti.

"Dear, dear Claire," he murmured with emotion, kissing Clairon's hand, "how good of you to have come!"

"Claire, Clairon," muttered Sauvaire, "it's all the same."

"Ah! Providence must have advised you," continued the priest, pushing the girl gently into the carriage and then following her. "We are off to Paradise," he added.

The postillion cracked his whip and the post-chaise started away with a frightful rumbling noise. Sauvaire and Marius then showed themselves, laughing until they almost cried.

"Eh! the abbé is eloping with the sister soul to his own," said Marius.

"A pleasant journey, abbé," cried Sauvaire.

When the chaise had disappeared in the night, bearing away Donadéi and Clairon, the master-stevedore and young clerk sauntered down the Boulevard de la Corderie, chatting about the adventure and giving way to sudden displays of gaiety, at the thought of the priest travelling alone with this creature.

"Can you fancy the face he'll make presently," said

Sauvaire, "when he raises Clairon's veil? Between you and me and the lamp-post, you know, Clairon is ugly. She is at least forty."

The master-stevedore willingly acknowledged Clairon's age and ugliness, since the girl's forty summers and faded countenance made the joke he was playing the more amusing.

He was splitting with laughter and anxious to reach the Cannebière to tell his friends the story. Marius, who was more serious, was thinking he had given the priest the company he deserved. He left the master-stevedore at about eleven o'clock at night and went home.

At midnight everyone at Marseilles who had not then retired to rest, knew that Abbé Donadéi had just eloped in a post-chaise, with a girl who had been wallowing in all the debauchery of the city for the previous fifteen years. Sauvaire had been shouting out the news in the cafés, and had related the adventure with a wonderful profusion of detail. That precious phrase of the graceful abbé as he got into the chaise: "We're off to Paradise!" was repeated from mouth to mouth. They knew he had kissed her hand; and they speculated as to the reason why the amorous couple had fled.

The best part of the business was that Sauvaire, not knowing why Marius had had Clairon carried off, displayed absolute naïveté. He understood that if Donadéi's passion for her could be made to appear serious, the joke would be all the more funny, and he therefore lied with all the assurance of an inhabitant of the south of France; he made believe that the priest was really dying of love for this wrinkled, sallow-faced creature, worn-out with shame, who was known to everyone.

There was general astonishment, universal mockery; people could not believe that the gallant abbé, with whom the penitent ladies of Marseilles were so charmed, had run away with such a woman, and they jeered to their heart's content at the monstrous alliance.

Next day the scandal was known to the whole city. Sauvaire triumphed and became a personage. They knew he had been Clairon's last protector, and that the abbé

had stolen the girl away from him. All day he sauntered up and down the Cannebière in slippers, comically receiving the condolences of his intimate acquaintances. He shouted out very loud, answering some, calling to others, using and abusing of his popularity. He certainly did not regret his thousand francs: he had never put out money for his amusement at so high a rate of interest.

The scandal became awful when Clairon returned two days later. Sauvaire bought her a silk gown and drove about Marseilles with her for a week, in an open carriage. People pointed them out, and ran to their doors as they passed by. The master-stevedore almost burst with delight.

Clairon had gone as far as Toulon. Abbé Donadéi had not been long in discovering the kind of person he was eloping with: he had then flown into a frightful rage, and wanted to throw her out on the highway at one o'clock in the morning, far from any dwelling. But Clairon was not to be so easily got rid of. She had talked big and threatened the abbé, making use of the arms Marius held in his hands. Donadéi trembling and compelled to give way, had been obliged to conduct his companion as far as Toulon, where they separated, Clairon returning to Marseilles, and the priest hurrying across the frontier.

Sauvaire drove the young person so much about and raised such an outcry, that the authorities took the matter in hand, and at the Bishop's request sent Clairon to exercise the power of her charms elsewhere. Since then the master-stevedore in his effusive moments, which occurred ten or twelve times a day, was in the habit of saying to all who liked to listen to him: "Ah! if you only knew what a pretty person I had under my protection! It was the priests who took her away from me!"

CHAPTER XIX.

PHILIPPE'S RANSOM.

MARIUS went to his office, on the day following the elopement, delighted with his expedition of the previous evening.

He had just saved an honourable family from despair, and had delivered the city of an intriguing man, against whom he had, moreover, a personal grievance. He was about to set to work with a light heart and tranquil conscience, when they came and told him that M. Martelly would be pleased to see him.

On his way to the drawing-room the young man suddenly made up his mind to ask his principal to lend him the money for Philippe's ransom. This decision set him all of a tremble. He felt he would never dare make such a request if he did not do so by a sort of impulse. As he had to see M. Martelly it would be useless to wait any longer, it would be better to risk the application at once.

He found M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier in the drawing-room. The ship-owner was pale and his eyes were sparkling with anger. He came straight to the clerk and speaking rapidly, said to him:

"You are a straightforward and courageous young man, and I thought I would not act in such a serious matter as this without asking your advice."

Abbé Chastanier appeared sad and ashamed. He made himself quite small in an armchair, his poor hands trembling with age and grief.

"I have just had this gentleman's visit," continued M. Martelly to Marius, pointing out the old priest, "and have received information of a plot that has quite upset me."

"Be calm for mercy's sake," interrupted the priest, "do not make me repent having done my duty as an upright man, in coming to set you on your guard. I may have been unnecessarily alarmed."

"You would not be here, sir, if your suspicions were not based on certitude. I thank you for your visit; I understand the feelings of dignity that have brought you to my house, and I even understand the final effort you are making to protect the infamous —"

The ship-owner turned to Marius and continued in a bitter tone:

"Only fancy, a priest is trying, at this moment, to dishonour me. This gentleman has just told me to watch over Claire. He has informed me with many omissions

that Abbé Donadéi exercises a dangerous influence over her and that he fears—Ah! if that wretch has tarnished the child's purity, I'll kill him like a dog!"

Abbé Chastanier hung his head. He did not regret the steps he had taken, he had acted as an upright man; but he was quite overcome at M. Martelly's explosion of anger. He suffered as much as if he had been guilty himself: he felt ashamed for the entire Church.

The ship-owner became a little more calm, and after a few moments' silence continued:

"I did not want to come to a decision before consulting a quiet and intelligent man, and I sent for you, Marius. My first impulse was to run to this priest and smack him in the face. There is perhaps another course to pursue that would be better."

Marius had listened quietly to his principal and this somewhat tranquillized Abbé Chastanier. The young man who had his answer all ready, was not thinking of Donadéi; he was wondering how he could solicit a loan. At that moment he heard M. Martelly say to him in a loud voice:

"Come, in my place, what would you do?"

The young man smiled:

"I would do what I have already done," he answered simply, and he gave an account of Clairon's elopement. From the first words, as soon as the young man had spoken of the interview he had had with Claire about the prayer-book, M. Martelly pressed his hands effusively. The certitude that his sister had not dreamt of the peril through which she had passed gave him great joy. He became quite gay when he had heard the whole account of the adventure, and even Abbé Chastanier could not restrain a sad smile.

"I should not have confessed to you," concluded Marius, "the part I had taken in this mystification if you had remained in ignorance of the danger threatening you. I merely wished to reassure you."

"Do not try to escape my gratitude," exclaimed the ship-owner. "I already looked on you as an adopted son, and you have just rendered me so great a service that I really do not know how to recompense you."

Speaking thus he took Marius aside and then gave him a kind and encouraging look in the face.

"Have you no secret to tell me?" he inquired in an undertone.

Marius became troubled.

"You are a great child," continued M. Martelly. "Fortunately I saw Mademoiselle Fine during your illness; otherwise I should still be in ignorance. Wait, I'll sign you a draft for fifteen thousand francs which you can encash, at once, in the counting-house if you wish."

Marius on hearing the ship-owner's generous offer was spell-bound to the spot. He turned pale and inexpressible emotion filled his eyes with great tears. He felt like choking and was afraid of bursting out into sobs.

Eh! What! He was suddenly offered this money which he had been seeking for in despair for so many months! He had asked for nothing and his dearest wishes were satisfied! He thought he must be dreaming.

M. Martelly had gone towards a table. He sat down and was preparing to write out an order on his firm. But before doing so he raised his head and simply said to Marius:

"It's fifteen thousand francs that you require, is it not?"

This question drew the young man from his stupor. He joined his hands and said in a trembling voice:

"How is it you know my secret thoughts? What have I done that you should be so good and generous?"

The ship-owner smiled:

"I will not say to you, as they do to children, that my little finger has told me all, but, in truth I received the visit of a fairy. Have I not already confessed it to you? Mademoiselle Fine came to see me."

The young man at last understood. He thanked warmly, from the bottom of his heart, the good angel who, while saving him from death, had worked to bring him tranquillity and hope. He now understood the flower-girl's placid, smiling countenance, when he had spoken to her of Philippe. She was certain of the prisoner's safety, she had accomplished all alone, the whole of the hard work connected with raising a loan. Marius hardly knew if he ought to

throw himself at M. Martelly's feet or at Fine's. He was overcome with gratitude.

The ship-owner was delighted to see his clerk's countenance lit up with joy. His eyes met those of Abbé Chastanier who had remained seated and the two men understood each other: the free-thinker, the republican, as well as the priest, experienced the joy of doing good, the delicious sensation of making another happy, and of being present to see that happiness.

"But," exclaimed Marius, amidst his delight, "I do not know when I shall be able to refund you so large a sum."

"Do not let that trouble you," answered the ship-owner. "You have rendered me great services, you have, perhaps, just saved me from dishonour. Allow me to oblige you without it being a question of refunding between us."

And as a sort of gloom passed across Marius' forehead, he took his hand and added:

"I do not mean to pay you for your devotedness, my friend. I know there are some debts that cannot be settled with money. I beg you to look at the matter in a different light: you have been with me for the last ten years, and I trust you will remain much longer; well! the fifteen thousand francs I am about to give you are a gratuity, a small share in the profits I have made with your help. You cannot refuse."

M. Martelly bent forward to sign the order when Marius stopped him again.

"Do you know the use I am going to make of this money?" he inquired, with some concern.

The ship-owner laid down his pen, annoyed and rather pale.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "how difficult it is to oblige straightforward people! They compel you to know everything. But for mercy's sake do not make me your accomplice. I am aware you are a good fellow, a devoted and affectionate soul. That is all. I have no need to know about all your acts and all your thoughts. You will never do a bad action, will you? That's quite enough for me."

M. Martelly obedient to a scruple which was quite reasonable, wished to appear ignorant that the money he was giving Marius was going to purchase a conscience. But apart from that, he lent a willing hand to Philippe's escape, being aware of the arms M. de Cazalis had made use of to imprison the young man. However, in principle, he wished to preserve his republican austerity intact, he had made up his mind that he would not openly be an accomplice of the escape.

Marius insisted. Then Abbé Chastanier intervened with that blind sentiment of charity, that always made him accept the heaviest responsibilities.

"Do not refuse," he said to the young man. "I know your plans and I will be your guarantor with M. Martelly that what you want to do is right and legitimate."

He smiled, with his meek smile of an old man. Marius understood what supreme charity had dictated his words and warmly shook his hands. In the meantime the ship-owner had signed the draft for fifteen thousand francs.

"There," he said, handing Marius the paper. "I advise you to go to the counting-house at once."

And as the young man, after thanking him again, was about to withdraw, he called him back:

"Look here," he added, "you must still be a little out of sorts. Take a week's holiday. You will work all the better afterwards."

He wished to give him time to deliver Philippe. Marius understood it, and was again moved to tears. He hastened away so as not to cry like a child, and repaired at once to the counting-house. When he had the fifteen thousand francs in his pocket, he went downstairs in four jumps, then he ran along the street like a madman to find Fine.

The flower-girl was just then in her little room on the Place aux Œufs. Marius burst in on her laughing and dancing like a lunatic, took the young girl in his arms and gave her a spanking kiss on each cheek. Then he spread the fifteen banknotes out on the table. Fine, who was astonished and almost frightened at his sudden entrance, now began to laugh and clap her hands.

A charming scene full of mutual tenderness and effusive

thanks followed. Marius vowed he was a simpleton and that she alone had saved the ship. He kissed her hands, fell on his knees before her and gazed up at her face with a troubled expression of ecstasy. She on her side blushed, protested warmly and sought to prove that she did not deserve the least acknowledgment.

For six months they had given themselves up entirely to a difficult task, and had knocked in vain at every door. And, now, all of a sudden, Philippe's ransom was spread out before their eyes. Naturally they forgot all their anxiety and fear, all the shame and stupidity with which they had momentarily come in contact. There was nothing in their hearts, at present, but tranquillity and intense joy.

Before separating they arranged that they would leave for Aix the following morning.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ESCAPE.

THE next morning, at about seven o'clock, Marius hired a cabriolet. He did not wish to go by the diligence, and as he needed a vehicle for the flight he preferred to hire one at Marseilles which would take him to Aix, and serve to bring back his brother. On the previous evening he had made an arrangement with a sea captain to convey Philippe to Genoa.

Marius and Fine set out at nine o'clock, the young man driving. It was quite a pleasure party for the two lovers. At the hill of La Viste, they got down and ran along the road like children, letting the horse come on at his own pace. They breakfasted in a small room at an auberge at Septèmes, and at dessert sketched out a multitude of plans for the future. Now that Philippe was about to be set at liberty they could think of their marriage, and were quite affected as they saw the time approaching when they would be able to love in peace.

The remainder of the journey was also very gay. Towards noon they passed beside the Albertas property, and

stopped again, to give the horse breath and take rest themselves, beneath the trees on the right hand side of the road, reaching Aix at three o'clock. Notwithstanding all the delay, they still arrived too soon. So as not to arouse suspicion they had decided not to go to the prison until the evening. In the meantime the young man left the cabriolet in care of his companion in a deserted street, and proceeded to the house of his relative Isnard, who placed horse and trap in safety, promising to bring them at midnight precisely to the summit of the hill of Arc. When these precautions had been taken the two young people hid themselves until dark.

As Marius and Fine were returning to Isnard's shop, the former, at the turn of a street, almost fell into the arms of M. de Cazalis, but he walked on rapidly with his head bent down, and the deputy did not notice him; nevertheless the young man was in despair at this meeting. He felt extremely anxious, fearing that some new misfortune might happen at the eleventh hour, to prevent him bringing his task to a happy issue. M. de Cazalis had no doubt come to Aix to hasten his vengeance, he thought, and had perhaps succeeded.

Marius was in a fever until the evening, and the most strange ideas passed through his mind. Now that he had the money, he dreaded meeting with other obstacles. At last, at nine o'clock, he went to the gaol accompanied by Fine. The two young people knocked at the massive door. A heavy step was heard and a harsh voice inquired what they wanted.

"It is us, uncle," exclaimed Fine. "Open the door."

"Open quick, Monsieur Revertégat," added Marius in his turn.

The voice grumbled and answered in a surly tone:

"M. Revertégat is no longer here, he is ill."

The wicket was shut, and Marius and Fine stood mute and bewildered at the closed door.

The flower-girl had not thought it necessary to write to her uncle for four months. She had his promise and that sufficed. So the news of his illness fell on her and her companion like a thunderbolt. It had never struck them

that the old fellow might be ill. And now all their efforts were paralysed by an unforeseen impediment. They had Philippe's ransom and were unable to deliver him. When they had in a measure recovered from their painful astonishment, Fine drew herself up.

"Let us go and see my uncle," she exclaimed, "he must be with one of his cousins in the Rue de la Glacière."

"What's the use?" answered Marius, "all is lost."

"No, no, come along."

He followed her as if bowed down by despair, while she stepped out boldly, unable to believe that chance could possibly be so cruel.

Revertégat was, in fact, at his cousins' in the Rue de la Glacière. He had been laid up there for a fortnight. When he saw the young people enter, he understood their errand. He raised himself up, kissed his niece on the forehead, and said to her with a smile:

"Well! the hour has come then?"

"We have been to the prison," answered the young girl, "and they told us you were ill."

"Good heavens! why did you not warn us?" exclaimed Marius sorrowfully, "we would have been more expeditious."

"Yes," continued the flower-girl, "now you are no longer gaoler, what are we going to do?"

Revertégat looked at them and seemed surprised at their despondency.

"Why are you in such despair?" he inquired at last. "I am rather unwell, it is true; I asked for a holiday, but I still hold my post; I shall be at your orders to-morrow evening, if you like."

Marius and Fine uttered an exclamation of delight.

"The man who answered you," continued Revertégat, "is taking my place for a few days. To-morrow morning I shall go and resume my duties; I have now only a little fever, and can go out without danger. Besides, the matter is urgent."

"I knew there was no occasion for despair!" exclaimed the flower-girl triumphantly.

Marius was trembling with emotion.

"You did quite right to come and see me to-day,"

continued the gaoler after a short silence. "I heard this morning that M. de Cazalis was at Aix, and was doing all he could to hasten on the performance of the sentence. They tell me he has succeeded in having it fixed for three days hence. If M. Philippe should not get away to-morrow night, I shall no longer be able to be of use to you, for after to-morrow the prisoner will be transferred to the gaol at Marseilles."

Marius shuddered. He had come just in time. He arranged with the gaoler and made an appointment for the next evening. He then ran and told Isnard that the escape was delayed for twenty-four hours.

On the morrow, the two young people remained hidden all day, and having a certitude, they were more calm. The escape was to be made at eleven o'clock. Towards ten, they repaired to the prison. Revertégat, who was at his post, gently opened the door and introduced them into the gaol.

"All is ready," he said.

"Is my brother prepared?" inquired Marius.

"Yes, but I have had to take some precautions. To save my responsibility as much as possible, I wish the prisoner to appear to have fled by the window of his cell."

"That's a capital idea, uncle," Fine interrupted, gaily.

"This is what I've done," continued Revertégat. "This afternoon I filed through one of the bars at M. Philippe's window, myself."

"But is it necessary for my brother to go through the window?" asked Marius, anxiously.

"Not in the least; we shall fetch him now, and he'll walk out with us by the door. Only I shall remove the one bar and fasten a piece of cord to the others. To-morrow they will suppose he escaped that way. I shall all the same send in my resignation, but by following this plan I shall avoid great annoyance."

Revertégat lit a dark lantern and the three proceeded towards Philippe's cell. They found him up and ready to leave, but he was so pale and emaciated that Marius hesitated to recognise him. They greeted each other in

silence, refraining from speaking, so as not to make a noise. The gaoler went to the window, wrenched out the iron bar and fastened the cord. Fine had remained in the passage on the watch, and all four then returned down the narrow corridors, gliding slowly along the walls in fear of knocking up against each other in the dark.

Marius had not let go of Philippe's hand. As soon as they had attained the gaoler's lodge he threw a cloak over him, hid his head in the hood, and wanted to get away at once. Now that he had almost reached the end of his trouble, he dreaded failure. He started at the least sound. Revertégat who feared that the noise they had made coming along the passages, might have given the alarm, had the greatest difficulty in keeping him quiet for a few minutes; being determined not to open the gate until he was sure that all was well. When he had ascertained that absolute silence reigned in the prison, he decided to draw back the bolts.

The two brothers with heads bent down, hurried off towards the Place des Prêcheurs, Fine remaining behind for a moment, to give her uncle the fifteen thousand francs. She rejoined her companions just as they were entering the little Rue Saint Jean.

They then took the Cours, walking in the dark shadow of the trees. They had now only one fear: they must quit the town, then closed with gates, which the keepers were required to open to be-lated travellers; and they were in dread of being stopped there miserably.

They continued walking, glancing around them, distrustful of the few people they happened to meet. On reaching the Rue des Carmes they perceived a man who began following them. Their hearts were beating fit to break. Suddenly this person hurried forward, and came and tapped Marius merrily on the shoulder.

"Eh! I'm not mistaken," he said, "it's you, my young friend. What on earth are you doing at this time of night on the Cours?"

Marius, in silent anger, was already clenching his fists, when he recognised the voice of M. de Girousse.

"As you see, I'm taking a walk," he stammered.

"Ah! You're taking a walk," continued the count in a bantering tone.

He looked at Fine and particularly at Philippe wrapped up in his cloak.

"That's a form I know," he murmured.

And he added with his friendly abruptness of manner:

"Shall I accompany you? You wish to leave Aix, do you not? They don't open the gate to everyone. I know a keeper. Come on."

Marius gratefully accepted. M. de Girousse had the gate opened without difficulty. On the way he had not addressed a single word to the young people, but when they reached the Place de la Rotonde he held out his hand to Marius and said:

"I'm going in by the Obitelle Gate. A pleasant journey."

And bending forward he added in an undertone:

"I shall have a good laugh to-morrow when I see de Cazalis' face."

As Marius looked after this generous man, who hid his goodness of heart beneath the sour-tempered manners of a well-doer, he was quite affected.

Isnard was awaiting the fugitives with the cabriolet. Philippe wished to drive so as to receive all the night air full in the face. He experienced intense delight in feeling the vehicle bearing him away in the darkness and appreciated to the utmost all the charm of liberty.

Then came effusions of the heart and mutual confidences as the horse slowly ascended the hills.

Fine and Marius confessed their love to Philippe, and when the latter heard that they would soon be married he became sad. He thought of Blanche. Marius understood his feelings and conversing with him, in an undertone, promised to watch over everything during his absence. In the meanwhile he would make active efforts to obtain his pardon, and neither he nor Fine would forget the exile.

The next morning, Philippe leaning on the bulwarks of a little craft bound for Genoa, gazed for a long time towards the shore of Saint Henri. Right away, above the blue waves, he perceived a grey speck, the house where poor Blanche was shedding away all the tears in her heart.

Part III.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONSPIRACY.

ONE calm evening in February, about two months after Philippe's escape, Blanche was taking a very slow walk. Twilight was just setting in. Far away, the sea was quite pale, and it broke sluggishly over the boulders on the beach, barely making any spray under the impulse of the evening breeze. The warmth of approaching spring could already be detected in the clear air. In the grand blue sky of the south one sometimes meets with winter suns, possessing all the invigorating heat of those of summer.

The young woman was taking short strides beside the cliff, watching night falling over the waves which were turning a blackish blue, whilst their plaintive sounds were becoming softer. The unhappy girl was much changed. She was barely seventeen, and yet the terrible fatalities of which she had been the victim, had caused her to stoop and had overspread her youthful face with the paleness of death. All her strength, all her gay and thoughtless life had passed away in tears. She was about to become a mother, and she walked along with faltering footsteps, suffering more from mental trouble than from her position.

A few paces behind her came a tall, thin, stiff-limbed woman, who followed her as a convict-keeper does his prisoner. She did not allow her out of her sight and watched all her movements. This woman was the new guardian whom M. de Cazalis had given his niece during the previous few weeks.

The deputy was then at Marseilles where he had hastened as soon as he had heard that a child was about to be born. He wished to be there on the watch. This child, this bastard which was about to make its appearance

in his family, exasperated him. But his mind was made up, and he was only waiting to put into execution the plan he had long since decided on.

When he had been able to absent himself, and go privately to the cottage at Saint-Henri, he came to the conclusion that his niece was not close enough a prisoner. She must be completely shut up if he wished to carry out his intentions. The first guardian he had selected, appeared to him too weak and accommodating. He had heard that a young girl came almost daily to talk to Blanche, and that made him particularly anxious. It was then that he decided on entrusting the guardianship of the cottage to a vigilant gaoler, who would allow no one to enter it, and who would give him a faithful account of the least incidents that happened.

Madame Lambert, the stiff-limbed, thin woman, the convict-keeper, was admirably adapted for such a position. She was an old maid, brought up with exaggerated ideas of religious zeal, had the harsh character of narrow-minded people and the unrelenting cruelty of those who have never loved. She knew Blanche had given way to the dictates of her heart and that made her all the harder, all the more implacable, she whom all men disdained. She rigorously performed the duty M. de Cazalis had entrusted her with, watched over her prisoner with diabolical cunning, surrounded her with absolute solitude and dismissed all who approached too near.

The cottage thus became a sort of citadel in which she entrenched herself, and where she had Blanche at her mercy. Fine was pitilessly driven away: as soon as she appeared on the hill Madame Lambert placed herself at one of the windows and continued to spy her movements until she withdrew; so the flower-girl, in the end, was obliged to give up her visits. Then poor Blanche almost died of grief and despondency, for she felt herself throttled by the coils her gaoler set about her, and which were drawn tighter every day.

Abbé Chastanier was the only visitor admitted, and even when he came, Madame Lambert arranged to hear what he said to his penitent.

On that particular evening Blanche had obtained permission from her guardian to take a short walk on the sea-shore. She was in great uneasiness and suffered from fits of giddiness which were calmed by the fresh air. The two people continued to follow the cliff, the young woman wondering how she could baffle this supervision which interfered with her plans, the guardian glancing behind each rock in fear that someone would suddenly rush out and rob her of her prisoner. As they were about to return, they suddenly saw a dark form advancing towards them along the narrow path.

Night had completely set in. Madame Lambert was greatly afraid, and was advancing rapidly in front when she recognised Abbé Chastanier. The priest not having found Blanche at the cottage had come to look for her on the beach.

"Let us go in quick," said Madame Lambert, sharply. "You will be more comfortable talking in the drawing-room. The breeze is becoming fresh."

"We are very well here," murmured Blanche. "Let us remain a little while longer."

And she nudged Abbé Chastanier so that he might support her.

"Eh! yes," he said in his turn, "it is quite a spring evening. The fresh air of the sea is beautiful, and will do our dear invalid a deal of good."

Then he took the young woman's arm and added gaily:

"We'll walk along together, my dear child, like a couple of lovers! If you are afraid of catching cold, Madame Lambert, pray go in. We'll rejoin you presently."

And he continued along the path beside the cliff, leading Blanche, who was laughing at his adroit manœuvre, along with him. The guardian took very good care not to go in; for she would have preferred to run the risk of catching twenty colds rather than lose sight of her prisoner for a quarter of an hour. She therefore proceeded to follow the pair at a distance of ten paces, full of anxiety, straining her ears to discover what they said, and angry against the waves, the sound of which prevented her hearing. She could listen at her ease in

the cottage, either openly or hidden behind a door; but there, on the rocks, she did not dare, she was unable to exercise her calling of spy.

"How much I thank you," said Blanche to the priest, in a sad and grateful tone, "for having helped me to procure a moment's conversation with you! My prison, as you see, becomes narrower and narrower every day."

"Have hope, my dear child," answered Abbé Chastanier, "you will soon be free, and you will then be able to act according to your faith and heart."

"Oh! I was not thinking of myself, they can do what they please with my personality, without fear that I shall ever have the least idea of revolting. Besides, you know my resolution, your words have shown me the only road I can follow now."

"It is not I, it is Providence that has brought you peace and hope."

Blanche did not seem to understand, but continued becoming animated little by little:

"I have sacrificed all my pleasure, and am pleased to suffer, for I hope thus to obtain my pardon. At times I would like to invent harder punishment to hasten my penitence."

"Then, my child, why do you complain of your solitude?" inquired the abbé gently.

"It is not a question of myself, my father. If I alone were threatened with imprisonment, perhaps for ever, I would be resigned to my fate, but I am trembling for the little creature I am about to bring into the world."

"What is there to fear?"

"I hardly know. If my uncle had not some plan he would not shut me up like this. Look at all the precautions that are taken to isolate me, to prevent me communicating, with you even. I am certain that at this moment Madame Lambert is in despair."

"You exaggerate."

"No, you know what I say is true, and you are endeavouring to dispel my anxiety. All this, you see, strikes terror into me, and I fear for my child, I fear a misfortune that I feel there, in the dark."

She preserved a painful silence, and then suddenly continued, in a broken voice:

“Will you help me to save my child?”

The priest was surprised and troubled at her cry. He hesitated without daring to answer.

“Be calm,” he said at length. “You know I am devoted to you.”

“I repeat,” continued Blanche, “that I have made the sacrifice of all my joy, but I wish my child to be happy.”

“What can I do for you?” asked Abbé Chastanier, moved by what she said.

Madame Lambert had approached little by little and was treading almost on their heels. Blanche heard the sound of her footsteps on the boulders and bending forward said to the priest in a low voice:

“Request Fine to come here to-morrow at about six o'clock in the evening and to pass beside me, without Madame Lambert being able to recognise her.”

The next day Blanche and her guardian were again strolling along the cliff at sunset. During the daytime the young woman had been complaining of a violent headache and had passed the whole afternoon shut up in her room. Then, towards evening, she had feigned giddiness and complained of feeling sick, in order to take the air beside the sea.

Madame Lambert who was full of distrust kept close to her, determined that she would not allow the same trick to be played her as on the preceding evening, whilst Blanche, from time to time, looked anxiously towards the Marseilles road.

As night closed in she saw in the distance a woman wrapped in a Provençal cloak, and with her face hidden in a large calico hood, advancing from that direction. At her quick, light step, she guessed it was the person she was expecting. The woman came rapidly forward, and, as she passed by, knocked up against Blanche, who handed her a letter murmuring:

“Accomplish my wishes, I beseech you!”

Fine's sweet face appeared for a moment under the hood, with a kind, consoling smile, full of promise of devotedness,

and then the flower-girl continued on her way as quickly as she had come.

Madame Lambert, thin and stiff, had neither seen nor understood anything.

CHAPTER II.

M. DE CAZALIS HAS A PLAN.

IT was as Blanche had said, if her uncle had not formed certain plans he would not have shut her up in this way. The desire to hide the young woman's condition did not justify the excessive precautions that M. de Cazalis was taking to isolate her, and keep her completely in his power. The merciless part played by Madame Lambert, the grave and severe attitude of the deputy, the solitary life she was made to lead, all warned the unfortunate girl that she was threatened with some cruel event which was being prepared in the dark. Maternal instinct told her that it was not her they sought to strike, but the infant that was still unborn. They were no doubt awaiting this little creature's birth, and then something terrible would take place which she could not foresee, but the thought of which made her tremble.

The fear which troubled Blanche was exaggerated. The solitude in which she lived caused her over-excitement and gave her horrible hallucinations. M. de Cazalis was not the sort of man to injure his reputation by martyring a child. He merely wished to make Blanche's heir disappear as promptly as possible. But here, in a few words, is an account of the plan he had formed, along with the reasons that urged him to act as he did.

Blanche at her father's death, was possessed of several hundreds of thousands of francs. She was then ten years old. She went to live with her uncle, who was appointed her legal guardian and who, from that time, administered her fortune. However, he did not make any great inroad into her wealth; but at the sight of so much gold in his hands, he lost his head, cut a great dash and spent

almost all he possessed. When his niece ran away with Philippe, he was in a dreadful fright of being called upon to produce the accounts of his guardianship, for if this fortune had been taken out of his control he would have been reduced to absolute poverty, as he had been living for several months entirely on his niece's money.

So long as the young girl remained with him, he knew he had nothing to fear. He could do what he pleased with her, bend her to his will like a piece of soft wax. The child's weak character put him at ease. Such a doll would never dare to claim her own. He was counting on marrying her or placing her in a convent whilst giving her the least money possible, but the escapade of the two lovers had quite put him out of his reckoning. If he had burst into a passion, hunted them down, taken his niece violently back home, it was because he was afraid of a marriage between her and Philippe: he knew Philippe, and he knew he was a man to make him give up the last piece of gold. His interest was affected quite as seriously as his pride.

While he was protesting aloud against a misalliance, he shuddered as he confessed to himself in his mind, that this misalliance would not merely be a stain on his coat of arms, but that it would also make a terrible hole in his purse, through which all his luxury and power would disappear.

And now Blanche was to have an heir, and that heir would be more exacting than his mother. All his calculations were upset. He became merciless, insisted on dragging Philippe to the pillory, sought to render him infamous in order to cast some of the infamy on his child, and wished to deprive the infant of his rights before he even came into the world. When he heard that Philippe had fled and had thus escaped the infamy in store for him, his anxiety became absolute terror. He was ruined.

The struggle was becoming terrible. If he were compelled to produce the accounts connected with his guardianship, he would become literally penniless. Indeed, he would feel extremely happy if he escaped so easily, at the cost of poverty, for he was not sure that he had not made

too wide and visible an inroad into Blanche's patrimony.

In the one case if he kept both his niece and her money with him, he could continue to live in grand style and plunder the young girl in a legal way; in the other, if he were suddenly asked for a statement of accounts, if the capital placed in his hands were exacted in the child's name, he would be obliged to ask for charity, in order not to die of hunger.

It is easy to conceive with what energy he accepted the battle and how eagerly he sought to triumph.

Blanche, for him, was nothing. At a simple look, on merely raising the voice, she trembled and consented to everything. But he shuddered at the thought of the child. That little creature who had not yet seen the light of day, made the all-powerful Cazalis turn pale. He caught himself hoping that it would be still-born. He would not have destroyed it, out of pride for his race, but he prayed Providence to do the work. The poor little creature would grow up, and some day, prompted by the Cayols, might demand his mother's wealth. This thought brought cold drops of perspiration to the deputy's forehead. The Cayols were his great terror. If they ever became possessed of the child they would rear it as an instrument of vengeance. Then he thought of all the misfortunes that would fall upon his head: he would have to disgorge, hand over a whole fortune to these people whom he would have liked to crush; and as for himself, he would, perhaps, have to go begging along the roads.

Those were the reasons that had made him shut up Blanche in the cottage on the sea-shore. He sought to isolate her from the Cayols, to prevent them coming to an understanding with her and stealing the child as soon as it was born. All the precautions he was taking, were in the view of obtaining full and entire possession of the infant. If he imprisoned Blanche it was solely for the purpose of imprisoning her babe. He had made up his mind to be there at the child's birth for the purpose of seizing it and preventing it being made the instrument of his ruin. In the meantime, he had instructed Madame Lambert to keep watch in the vicinity of the cottage and

to see that no one penetrated within. He feared surprise.

He said to himself that he would only be in safety when he had secured the babe. Sometimes, at the bottom of his heart, he was almost pleased that his niece had been guilty of an irreparable fault. If she had married, he would only have succeeded with the utmost difficulty in retaining a small part of her fortune. Now, it was probable she would never marry; she would enter a convent to weep over her shame, and he could keep all her money with impunity. He tolerated Abbé Chastanier's visits because he hoped the old priest would indicate religion to Blanche as a refuge. He felt that this way of getting rid of the unfortunate girl would certainly succeed.

When once the mother was in a convent, he would attend to the little one. His plan consisted in keeping it near him, and bringing it up with care, so as to endeavour to set its mind, also, on religion. However, he could not foresee the future. The only thing he wanted was to have all the chances on his own side. In place of immediate ruin he preferred the risk of a catastrophe in the distance. His adopted son, if son it were, would grow up under his eyes, and he would endeavour to get rid of him in an upright way, either by persuading him to take Holy Orders, or by getting him killed in warfare, after having discovered a legal means to rob him of what belonged to him. If it were a girl, he would make her take the veil. In any case, boy or girl, he must prevent the child falling into the hands of the Cayols at any cost.

We now know the plan that M. de Cazalis had formed. He came to see Blanche every morning, accompanied by a doctor who gave him daily information as to her condition. When she ventured to make a timid complaint as to the way in which she was imprisoned, he flew into a passion, spoke of the honour of the family, and made her crimson by shouting out to her that she ought to bury herself in a tomb of her own accord, to hide her shame from the world. He wanted to finish with the business, for he was anxious to return to Paris, where his Parliamentary duties required his presence, it being the middle of the Session;

but he had made up his mind not to leave until he had placed the new-born babe in sure hands.

Each day he made Madame Lambert give an exact account of what had occurred during his absence and was particular in asking her if she had seen anyone loitering near the house. The guardian set his mind at ease, no one had approached the place, and he began to think there would be no contention for the child.

And so he was immensely delighted when he was informed one morning, that the birth would in all probability take place that same evening.

But Blanche had heard what had been said in an undertone, and when her uncle and the doctor had left her room, she dragged herself to the window and fastened a piece of white rag to the shutter.

CHAPTER III.

WHICH TELLS OF THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY A PIECE OF WHITE RAG.

To understand the events that are about to follow, it is necessary to give a short description of the cottage on the seashore. It was built in a rather peculiar way: it had two doors, one in the front which gave access to the rooms below, and the other at the back which led straight from the ground to the rooms upstairs. The cottage was built against the rock, so that the first floor, seen from the country, appeared to be only a ground floor.

The room occupied by Blanche was upstairs to the left of the staircase and had windows facing the sea. Following on to this room was a smaller one which served as a dressing-room, and into this opened the door at the back. This door had a rusty lock and had perhaps not turned on its hinges for twenty years. The key to it being lost, it was never used.

When M. de Cazalis took the house, he had not thought of troubling about this exit, which seemed closed for good.

Blanche, some days before being laid up, while looking

for a pin she had dropped, was very much surprised to come across a key hidden between the floor and the wall, and her first thought was that it must belong to the door in question. She was not mistaken: it turned in the lock, and pulling the door towards her she was able to gaze out on the country. She placed her discovery in safety, and spoke to no one about it, being forewarned by a sort of instinct, that she would in future have a means of safety in her hands.

On the day she was taken ill she fastened a piece of white rag to the window shutter, and then, after taking the key from the bottom of a drawer where she had hidden it, went back to bed and slipped it under the bolster.

As soon as M. de Cazalis heard that the baby would be born that evening he resolved to stay in the house, and not leave it until the child was in his possession. He retained a doctor, sent for the midwife, and despatched a messenger to Marseilles to fetch a wet-nurse whom he had engaged some time previous, and who was a creature of his own, on whose fidelity he could rely.

When these precautions had been taken he awaited events. To pass the time, he went for a walk beside the sea, feeling very anxious notwithstanding his busy frame of mind, and thinking he would be lost if the infant escaped him. He calmed himself, a little, by reflecting that such a thing was impossible, as he would not leave Blanche's door until the new-born babe had been taken away by the wet-nurse. He walked for several hours along the beach casting, from time to time, a glance at the windows of his niece's room. Madame Lambert was to come and call him as soon as all was over. Night closed in, and he ended by seating himself among the boulders, watching the shadows flitting across the cottage windows.

In the meanwhile poor Blanche was in agony, and at one time doctor and midwife despaired of her life. She had been so weakened by sorrow, that she was hardly able to bear up against the present physical trial. She had a son, but she did not hear the poor little thing's first cry: pale, insensible, and with the appearance of a corpse, she was lying on her couch of pain. The infant

was placed beside her, the wet-nurse not having yet arrived, and Madame Lambert ran to inform M. de Cazalis that everything had ended well, and his niece was dying.

The deputy came in all haste, very much annoyed to find that the wet-nurse was not there. He, however, restrained himself, so as not to show his anxiety before the doctor and midwife. At heart he cared very little about his niece's sufferings, but in presence of her pale exhausted form extended on the bed, he had to assume a concerned and affectionate manner. Turning to the doctor he inquired if there was still danger.

"Not at present," was the answer, "and I think I can withdraw."

Then pointing to the midwife:

"Madame's presence will be sufficient, only I must impress on you that the patient must be spared all worry and excitement. Her life depends on it. I will come again to-morrow."

The wet-nurse arrived just as M. de Cazalis was seeing the doctor out. He returned with her into the house, and severely upbraided her as they went upstairs to Blanche's room. The wet-nurse excused herself as best she could and the deputy gave her his final instructions. She was to take away the new-born child and watch over him from hour to hour, with the greatest vigilance. The following morning she was to leave for the village where she resided, and which was situated in an out-of-the-way corner in the department of the Basses-Alpes. He hoped they would not go and ferret out his great nephew at the bottom of such a hole as that.

He found Madame Lambert and the midwife silently bending over the patient's bed, but when he approached to take the child, so as to give him to the nurse, he met Blanche's eyes. They had just opened wide, and were fixed upon him. He had the courage, however, to stretch out his arm.

Then the young woman making a great effort succeeded in sitting up in bed and pressed the child to her bosom.

"What do you want?" she said to M. de Cazalis in a choking undertone.

The deputy started back.

"The wet-nurse is here," he replied, hesitating. "You know what was agreed. You must give her your child."

He had told her a few days before the event that the honour of the family depended on Philippe's child being sent away from the moment of its birth. She had shewn herself as pliant as usual on hearing her uncle's brief and cruel words. But she had hoped she would have been able to keep the new-born babe with her at least for twenty-four hours, for it was on that hope she had based her plan for placing him out of harm's way.

When she heard M. de Cazalis insist on the child being instantly handed over to the nurse, she imagined all was lost. If they took him away at once, her plan was upset, she had no time to put him beyond the danger that she foresaw, with her motherly anxiety, would be in store for him, and she became still paler than before, if possible, as she pressed him to her bosom.

"Oh! for mercy's sake!" she exclaimed, "leave him me until to-morrow morning."

She felt herself weak, and was afraid of showing cowardice and obeying.

The deputy continued with a voice that he endeavoured to keep calm, in order not to be overheard by the midwife:

"You are asking me what is impossible. Your son must disappear for some time, if you do not wish to be covered with shame."

"I will give him you to-morrow," pleaded Blanche, shuddering. "Be kind, permit me to gaze on him and love him until then. That cannot do you any harm, no one will see him to-night in this room."

"It's much better to finish at once. Kiss him and give him to the nurse."

"No! I shall keep him. You are killing me, sir!"

She uttered these last words in an heartrending tone of voice. M. de Cazalis said no more, fearing to fly into a passion: this unforeseen resistance surprised and alarmed him. He was advancing to grasp the poor little creature which the mother held folded in her arms, when the midwife, who had been listening, took him aside and told

him she would not be answerable for his niece if he persevered in this odious scene. He then saw that it was necessary to give way.

"Very well! Keep your son," he exclaimed sharply. "The wet-nurse will wait until to-morrow."

Blanche placed the babe beside her, then fell back on the pillow, surprised and happy at her victory. A pink tint overspread her cheeks, she shut her eyes feigning sleep, and felt full of hope and joy.

Shortly afterwards Madame Lambert and the midwife seeing her quiet, withdrew to take a little rest, and M. de Cazalis remained for an instant alone with his niece, who continued to keep her eyes shut. He looked at the new-born babe and said to himself that this poor creature, so weak and puny, was his most cruel enemy. As he was at last about to leave the apartment he fancied he heard a slight noise in the dressing-room. He opened the door and looked, but seeing nothing he thought he must have been mistaken. Then he made up his mind to go downstairs, but with the intention of sitting up all night, for in spite of himself, he felt secretly uneasy. If he had given way to Blanche, it was because he could not do otherwise. The infant ought already to have been far away. However, he would get rid of him to-morrow, that was understood, and it was impossible for the Cayols to come and take him between now and then. He had put bolts on the front door himself.

As soon as Blanche was alone, she abruptly raised herself in bed and listened attentively, for she also had heard a slight noise coming from the dressing-room. She rose with an effort, took the key hidden under the bolster and staggered along, clutching hold of the articles of furniture, towards the door at the back of the house. This was an imprudence that might kill her. But she seemed borne up by superhuman strength and advanced along the tile-flooring without reflecting that she was risking her life. She simply said to herself that she was saving her son.

There was a scratching at the old front door and that was the noise which had attracted the attention of M. de

Cazalis. Blanche, who was giddy, managed to get the key into the lock, after having nearly fainted more than ten times, and turn it. The door opened and Fine entered.

The note Blanche had given her in secret a few days before, contained these few sentences: "I have need of your affection and devotedness. I know what your heart is like, and I come to you as to a friend. When I require your assistance I will fasten a white rag to my window shutter. I shall expect you at about one o'clock on the following morning. Keep at the old front door at the back of the house and scratch against it softly to apprise me of your presence. You will be my good angel."

When Fine had perused this note she understood that it referred to Philippe's child. She consulted Marius who advised her to comply precisely with the instructions Blanche gave. The next morning, the flower-girl placed a lad on the beach at about a hundred yards from the cottage, with orders to come and tell her as soon as ever he perceived the signal agreed upon. The lad remained at his post for nearly a week without seeing anything. At last, one morning, he caught sight of the white rag and ran in all haste to Marseilles.

In the evening Fine and Marius came in a cabriolet to Saint-Henri. They left the vehicle in the village and both walked towards the rocks in the midst of which stood the cottage. He remained in hiding at a few steps from the old front door, while she scratched at it, at the appointed hour.

Blanche barely had time to let her in, before falling into her arms in a fainting fit. The flower-girl promptly carried her to her bed, covered up her shivering limbs, and then hastened to bolt the door on the landing so that no one might surprise them. After that, she threw off her long cloak and gave all her attention to the invalid whose eyes remained closed.

Blanche, little by little, recovered consciousness. As soon as she opened her eyes and recognised Fine beside her, she raised herself up, and with her heart full of joy and hope, fell on the girl's neck and wept tears of happiness.

For a few moments neither was able to speak, but Fine, catching sight of the baby, took it up and kissed it. Then a stifled cry escaped Blanche's lips.

"You'll love him as if you were his mother, won't you?" she asked.

The flower-girl gazed on the infant with that tender look of girls who are in love and dream of maternity. While contemplating Philippe's son, she thought with a blush of Marius, and said to herself:

"I shall have a child like that." Then she placed the babe on the bed and sat down beside Blanche.

"Listen," the latter said, rapidly, "we have very little time before us. They may come upstairs and surprise us at any moment. You are quite devoted to me, are you not?"

Fine bent forward and kissed her on the forehead.

"I love you as a sister," she answered.

"I know it, and it is for that reason that I confide in you. I am going to give you the most sacred legacy that any woman can leave behind her."

"But you are not dead!"

"Yes, I am dead! In a few days, when I am well again, I shall belong to the Almighty. Do not interrupt me. I quit this world, and, before leaving it, I desire to give my child a mother, for he will soon have none, and I have thought of you."

And Blanche gave Fine a warm pressure of the hand.

"You have done well," said the flower-girl, calmly.

"You know I always considered that your child would be, in a sort of way, mine."

"I need not tell you to love him," said the invalid with an effort. "Love him as you know how to love, with all your heart; love him for me and for Philippe, and endeavour to let him have a happier life than that of his parents."

She was choking with sobs, but after a few moments continued:

"Although I have only to ask you, for you to love my child, I must implore you with joined hands to watch over him vigilantly. From to-morrow, hide him

somewhere, in some out-of-the way corner; endeavour to prevent anyone suspecting the secret of his birth; in a word, swear to me that you will protect him against everyone and keep him always near you as a sacred trust."

As she spoke she became excited and Fine had to make her a sign imploring her to lower her voice.

"Do you fear foul play?" inquired the flower-girl softly.

"I know not what I fear. It seems to me that my uncle hates this child, and I hand him over to you so that he may not remain in his power. As I am unable to be there to watch over him I desire to leave him to an honest person who will make a man of him. Besides if, even, I were not going to quit this world, I would refuse to keep him with me, because I am weak and cowardly, and would not know how to defend him."

"Defend him against whom?"

"I know not. I shudder, that is all. My uncle is implacable. But do not let us speak of that. I give you my child and in future he will be in safety. I can now go away in tranquillity of mind. I was so afraid not to see you to-night and not to be able to hand you this poor little mite!"

There was a moment's silence and Fine resumed in a hesitating voice:

"As you are giving me your last instructions, I may, and, indeed, I ought to put a question to you. I know you will not misinterpret my intentions. I think you possess a large fortune which M. de Cazalis is administering?"

"Yes," answered Blanche, "but I have never troubled about the money."

"Your son requires nothing now, and so long as he remains with us, he may be poor but we will bestow a wealth of tenderness and happiness on him. Still, some day, a fortune, in his hands, may be a powerful lever. You do not intend to deprive him of your estate?"

"I told you I was leaving the world, I shall be like one who is dead."

"That is another reason for assuring his future. Ask

M. de Cazalis for a statement of his account. Set your affairs in order before you disappear."

Blanche shuddered.

"Oh! I shall never dare do that," she murmured. "You have no idea of the terrible power my uncle exercises over me: a mere look crushes me. No, I cannot ask him for a statement."

"However, your son's interests require it."

"No, I tell you, I have not the courage."

Fine for an instant was silent and embarrassed. Her duty urged her to insist, she would have liked to overcome Blanche's cowardly attitude.

"As you will not act yourself," she continued at last, "allow others to watch over the interests of this poor little creature. You make no objection to the fortune, which you now appear to abandon, being, one of these days, claimed on his behalf?"

"You are cruel," answered the young mother, with tears in her eyes, "you make me feel my weakness and powerlessness to act. You know that I give you all authority."

"Then nothing is lost. Do not put your name to any document, do not sign away a single inch of your property. And, moreover, as soon as you are better, let me have the certificates establishing your son's identity. In that way we shall be strong, and able to speak with authority when the time comes."

Blanche seemed overcome with these questions of money. Had she been possessed of the least energy, she would not have withdrawn from the struggle, she would have lived for her child, protected him, herself, and defended his interests. The flower-girl guessed the tenor of her reflections and added in a lower voice:

"If I have caused you pain, if I have put all these questions to you, it is because there is a man who has claims on this child, and who one of these days will himself watch over his interests. I shall then want to give him an account of my mission and instruct him as to how he must proceed in order to complete it."

Blanche burst out sobbing:

“I have never spoken to you of Philippe,” she exclaimed, “because I ought to think of him no more. He left within me a love that has devoured me and brought me to repentance. Tell him I have loved him to the point of quitting this world at the age of seventeen, and tell him I entreat him to labour for the welfare of our son. Whatever he does will have my approval.”

Just at that moment Fine heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. She rose, hurriedly wrapped her cloak around her and took the child which the weeping mother was holding out to her, and passionately kissing again and again. This farewell was full of mute despair and anxious haste.

Blanche got out of bed to accompany Fine and close the door behind her. On the threshold she gave the little one a last kiss on the forehead. Then, she had only just time to pull back the bolt of her bedroom door and get into bed again. Her uncle entered softly.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH M. DE CAZALIS RUNS THE RISK OF LOSING HIS HEAD WHILE LOSING HIS GREAT NEPHEW.

M. DE CAZALIS had fallen half asleep downstairs in a sitting-room under Blanche's bedroom. In this drowsy state, it had several times seemed to him that he heard people walking about overhead. A more distinct sound ended by awakening him with a start. He stood up, full of distrust, and went to make sure whether he had been dreaming or not. But all he feared was that Blanche might have risen to write a letter and thus inform her friends outside of what had occurred. It never entered his head that someone could have penetrated within the house, for he had kept an eye on the front door like a watch-dog.

He went upstairs determined to see what his niece was doing. As he heard nothing moving, he gently pushed the door open and cast a look round the room. By the pale

glimmer of the night-light, he perceived Blanche with her eyes closed, and her face half hidden by the bed-clothes, apparently in a heavy sleep. Encouraged by the silence, he resolved to be quite sure by making a minute inspection of the apartments; he first of all searched the dressing-room and found nothing suspicious; he returned to the bedroom and there was nothing there. He was already smiling at his childish alarm, when a thought flashed across his mind and he suppressed an exclamation. He had not seen the child.

Although he had already peered into every corner he renewed his search. He brutally shook the bed without Blanche opening her eyes, and it did not even occur to him from this circumstance that she was feigning slumber. His mind was a prey to the most excruciating agony, and in despair he ended by moving round like a wild beast, having but one idea, that of finding the new-born babe at any cost. In his anxiety he stooped down and looked under the articles of furniture, imagining his niece had hidden her son somewhere, to make him afraid and drive him mad. For nearly a quarter of an hour he ferreted about in a fury, returning to the same spot ten times over, unable to believe the dreadful truth.

When he was tired, when he had acquired the certitude that the child was neither in the bedroom nor dressing-room, he went and stood before the bed where Blanche was lying exhausted and motionless. He gazed in a stupid manner round the room, where the little one had been when he had last left his niece, and repeated methodically: "He was there and is there no longer." These words found a painful echo in his brain.

At first he did not think of seeking a solution to this strange disappearance. He saw only the fact, and his fright showed him in a flash, all the consequences of that fact.

All his calculations were baffled. Blanche's heir was no longer in his hands, and he would be compelled, some day or other, to give him a statement as to what he had done with his mother's money. That meant shame and misery; it would be ascertained that he had already made

an inroad into his niece's fortune and they would take away from him the riches which alone upheld his power. This frightful blow was the forerunner of a series of reprisals. He had no doubt as to the hand that had dealt it, he recognised a vengeance of the Cayols, and he was in terror at the thought that these people had now his honour at their command. He saw that he was at their mercy, and that they could inflict most terrible chastisement on him for his pride.

What irritated him above all was failing at the last moment. A few hours longer and Philippe's son would have been placed beyond reach of the Cayols. He felt that if he had not given way to Blanche's tears the child would already have been far away. This thought reminded him of all the precautions he had taken, and he said to himself that a clever plan had never so miserably failed. Little by little he became angry, and gave way to blind irritability at seeing himself duped in this cruel way.

Then he tried to understand how the child had been carried off and this mental investigation increased his anger. He understood that his niece must have had a hand in the conspiracy, and had half a mind to beat her.

"What have you done with him?" he inquired, in a gruff voice.

Blanche had been trembling between the sheets ever since her uncle had entered the room. She kept her eyes obstinately closed in order that she might not see him, and also to delay the scene she foresaw was coming. She listened with terror to the sound of his footsteps, she followed him in his fruitless search, and in a measure as the crisis drew nearer, she trembled more violently and became still more icy cold. When he came and stood beside the bed, and examined her, motionless, dumb with stupor, she imagined he was reflecting on the means of putting an end to her existence. His loud voice made her open her eyes; but her throat was dry, thick with agony, and she could not answer.

"What have you done with the child?" M. de Cazalis asked her again in a stifled voice.

She stammered, but was unable to pronounce a single

word. Then her uncle accused and reviled her with brutal rage.

"You are not of my blood," he exclaimed, "I disown you. I ought to have left you in the hands of that black-guard who carried you off. You are a worthy companion for him. What! You go in league with our enemies, you distrust me and prefer to confide your child to that family of tatterdemalions! Don't deny it. I see it all. Look here! You are a vile creature. After having dishonoured our name, you do not flinch from placing us at the mercy of your lover. Oh! I was wrong. I ought to have seen that you had a filthy heart and should not have meddled with this dirty business. I hope they'll make a rascal of your son, a scoundrel like themselves, a beggar who'll come one of these days begging at our door and whom I'll drive away."

He spoke thus for a quarter of an hour, a prey to the fury that blinded him and which prevented him perceiving the stupidity of his behaviour. He showed no respect for anything, drenched his niece with foulness, wounded her so deeply that she rose up, trembling, powerful with courage in her indignation and grief. If he had contented himself with being imperious and cold, she would have shewn weakness and have given him other arms against her; but as he was coarse, she became strong, and answered him firmly:

"You have guessed aright, sir, I have handed my son to those to whom he belongs. I am not obliged to give you the reasons that prompted me in my conduct, and I tell you that at this moment you are outstepping any rights you may have over me. However, you know I have come to a resolution: as soon as I have recovered I shall take the veil, we shall be strangers to each other. Cease, then, reviling me."

"But why would you not leave me this child whom I would have loved as a son?" continued her uncle, who with difficulty restrained himself.

"I acted according to the dictates of my heart," she continued. "Do not question me, I cannot answer you. I am willing to forget your abuse, and to thank you for

having watched over my childhood. That is all I can do. You have nearly killed me, now leave me."

M. de Cazalis understood that he had gone too far. He was afraid that his niece might guess the reason of his anger. This thought troubled him and suddenly calmed his irritation. He could not, however, resist speaking to her on a dangerous subject.

"There are accounts between us," he stammered, "which must be settled."

"Do not let us talk of that," Blanche answered excitedly. "I have neither the strength nor the inclination to busy myself with such matters. As I have told you, I am dead to the world. I shall require nothing in the future. As to my son, he will apply to you later on, and set forth his claims if he chooses to do so. I have left his interests in honest hands. Only I must warn you that those of whom you spoke so brutally a little while ago, are decided on acting, in case you oppose my wishes. Now for mercy's sake leave me."

Blanche fell back on the pillow satisfied at having conquered, and went to sleep peacefully.

M. de Cazalis hesitated for a moment and then, finding nothing to add, withdrew. The misfortune that had just happened was irreparable, but he still preferred peril in the distance to an immediate explanation. Children do not grow up in a day, and he calmed his feelings of uneasiness, with the thought that he would have plenty of time to set his house in order. Later on, when the mother had taken the veil, he could institute a search for the son and obtain possession of him. He knew Philippe had fled to Italy, and he concluded from that that the new-born babe had been handed to the fugitive's brother. It was, therefore, against Marius that he thought of directing his operations.

In the meanwhile he went to Paris to fulfil his duties as deputy. He thus avoided acting rashly and could consider, at leisure, the plan he proposed to pursue.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH BLANCHE BIDS FAREWELL TO THE
WORLD.

BLANCHE was three weeks in bed between life and death. The great strain her nerves had undergone on the evening her child was born, brought on a fever which nearly carried her off. During these three weeks of agony Abbé Chastanier and Fine were at her bedside.

M. de Cazalis on leaving, had dismissed Madame Lambert who was henceforth useless, and the cottage was once more open to the flower-girl. There was no guardian to watch the invalid, her uncle having been contented to place her in the hands of the old priest, in the sincere hope that on his return to Marseilles, he would find her buried in some convent.

Blanche, little by little recovered. The tender and devoted care of which she was made the object, the bitter, healthy sea breeze that came in freely at her windows, obliged her to live in spite of her secret desire to die, and thus leave the world where she had already suffered so much pain. When the doctor told her she was saved, she turned her great, sad, invalid's eyes towards Fine, and said to her with a feeble smile:

"I should have been so comfortable in the earth! But it was not to be. I must continue suffering."

"Please not to go on like that!" exclaimed the young girl. "The dead feel cold in the earth, you may be sure! Love, do good, and you will have a long life of happiness before you!"

And she passionately kissed Mademoiselle de Cazalis, who answered in a softer tone:

"You are right, I forgot that I could work to lessen the misery of the unfortunate, and thus secure some comfort for myself."

The period of convalescence was not long. Blanche was soon able to get up and drag herself to the window. There she passed her time in a consoling contemplation

of the great sea which spread out in its apparent infinity before her. All invalids should go and get cured beside the blue waters of the Mediterranean, for its calm immensity has a tranquil majesty about it that appeases pain.

It was on a clear morning, beside the open window, with her eyes lost on the bluish horizon, that Blanche spoke out plainly to Abbé Chastanier of her firm intention to take the veil.

"My father," she said, "I am gaining strength every day, and, as the life of this world is not suitable for me, I desire, as soon as I am well, that my first steps may take me to God."

"My daughter," answered the priest, "this decision is a grave one. Before binding yourself with everlasting bonds, I ought to remind you of the good things you are leaving——"

"It is useless," interrupted the young woman, excitedly, "my resolution is irrevocable. You are familiar with all the reasons that urge me to affiancé myself to Heaven. You, yourself, have pointed divine love out to me as the only refuge against the human love by which I have been crushed. Do not treat me as a child, I beg of you: look on me as a woman who has suffered a great deal and desires to atone for her cowardice. Confess it, my father, there are no earthly advantages comparable to the tranquillity of one's spirit, and, if I succeed in tasting the joys of pardon, I shall not regret the mundane satisfaction to which I renounce so willingly. Do not prevent me going to God."

Abbé Chastanier bowed his head. Blanche spoke in such a deep and troubled voice that he understood heavenly grace had touched this poor child, and that it would be wrong to deprive her of the sweets of abnegation.

"I did not wish to raise a discussion as to my resolution," continued the convalescent, in a calmer voice. "I desired to consult you as to the religious order I ought to choose. As I told you, I feel strong, and in a week I must leave this beach, every rock on which, reminds me of my short life of grief and passion."

"I have already reflected on the choice you might

make," answered the priest, "and I have thought of the Carmelite order.

"Are not the Carmelites cloistered?"

"Yes, they lead a contemplative life, they kneel to God and implore him to pardon the world. They are the daughters of ecstasy. Your place is among them. You are weak, you need to forget, to place an impenetrable barrier between you and your youth. I advise you to shut yourself up in the innermost recesses of the cloister, far from mankind, and to live in earnest prayer full of forgiveness and celestial peace."

Blanche gazed at the great sea. The priest's words had brought tears to her eyes. After a silence she murmured, as if speaking to herself:

"No, no, it would be cowardice to seek for calm in that way, to slumber in ecstasy. It would be a sort of divine egotism and I will have none of it. I wish to earn my pardon by working with my hands and heart for the good of the unfortunate. If I cannot watch over my child, I will watch over those children of poor mothers who are without bread. I feel that at such a sacrifice only, shall I be happy."

There was another silence; then taking the abbé's hand and gazing in his face, she added:

"My father can you procure my admission among the sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, those whom they term the sisters of the poor?"

Abbé Chastanier protested, saying she was too delicate, that she would not be able to stand up against the fatigue that these saintly creatures endure in the hospitals, orphanages, everywhere where there are services to be rendered to the suffering and forlorn.

"Do not be alarmed!" exclaimed Blanche, in a transport of self-sacrifice, "I shall be strong in order to earn my forgiveness. I can only accept the chalice of labour. If I do not make myself useful I shall never forget. I have a last request to make to you: let me be placed in an orphanage; I shall fancy myself the mother of all those little creatures entrusted to my care, I will cherish them as I would have my own child."

She wept; she spoke with such transports of affection that Abbé Chastanier was obliged to give way. He promised to take the necessary steps, and a few days later he announced to Blanche that her wishes would be realized. Besides, he considered the young woman's decision very natural: her spirit which was full of blind devotion, had been formed to understand extreme abnegation. He wrote to M. de Cazalis who answered him in terms of perfect indifference, that his niece was free, and that whatever she decided on would be satisfactory. At the bottom of his heart, he was delighted to see her enter a poor and modest Order that was not so rapacious for dowries as some of the others.

On the evening of the day preceding that on which Mademoiselle de Cazalis was to leave the cottage, she appeared quite uneasy and embarrassed in Abbé Chastanier's presence. Fine, who was there, pressed her with questions as to the cause of this sudden sadness. She ended by falling on her knees before the priest and saying to him in a trembling voice:

"My father, I am not yet dead to the pleasures of this world. I should like to see my son for the last time, before belonging entirely to God."

The abbé hastened to raise her from the ground.

"Go," he answered her, "go where your heart calls you, and learn that you do not offend Heaven by giving way to your tenderness. Heaven loves those who love. That is all the Christian doctrine."

Blanche who was quite troubled, hastened to get ready. Fine was to take her to her child and both of them soon went out. From the day the infant had been born, they had both avoided speaking of the poor little creature. The flower-girl had simply set the young mother's mind easy by saying he was in safety, and well, and had all possible care.

When Fine and Marius found themselves in possession of the new-born babe, they returned in the cabriolet to Marseilles. The next morning they played a most audacious game by taking the child to Saint Barnabé, and giving him to the wife of the gardener Ayasse,

thinking that M. de Cazalis would never seek him there.

It was to Saint Barnabé, then, that Fine took Blanche. When the latter caught sight of the gardener's cottage, with the great mulberry trees spreading their branches before the entrance; when she saw the stone bench on which she had been seated with Philippe, all the past flew back to her memory, and she burst out sobbing.

Barely a year had gone by, and yet it seemed as if centuries of suffering separated the hour of her first love from the present. She could still see herself hanging round her lover's neck, without a care and hoping for a future full of happiness. And, at the same time, she saw herself disconsolate, her heart bleeding, so broken that she was on the point of renouncing the pleasures of her eighteen summers. She was choking with intense bitterness when she reflected that a few months had sufficed to take her from those hopes of happiness which are burning in the hearts of all young girls to the dark thoughts of remorse which weigh on the minds of penitents.

Blanche had come to a standstill before the gardener's door, trembling with emotion, not daring to enter, fearing to meet Philippe's ghost in this cottage where he had fondled her. Fine, who perceived her trouble, dispelled her fright and calmed the fever of her memory by calmly saying to her:

"Come, go in. You will find your son there."

Blanche darted into the house. Her son she thought, would defend her against the past. As soon as she had taken three steps in the first room, which was spacious, countrified, and full of smoke, she found herself before a cradle. She bent over the infant who was sleeping in it and contemplated him for a long time without awakening him. The gardener's wife seated near the door, was knitting a stocking and singing a sweet slow Provençal air, in an undertone.

Blanche kissed the babe's forehead in the twilight. She wept, and her tears awoke the child, who put his little arms forward with a vague complaint. The mother felt her heart fail her. Did not her duty call her to this cradle? Had she the right to take refuge in the bosom

of God? But she was afraid of giving way to a yearning she had not avowed, to mad hopes. Then she said to herself that she had sinned and would be punished; she thought she heard a voice crying to her: "Your punishment will be, to be deprived of the caresses of your child!" And she ran away sobbing, after having covered the face of the little creature she was to see no more, with kisses.

Henceforth, the young woman was dead to all love, but that of God; she had just rent in twain the last link that attached her to the world. This final crisis freed her of her own flesh and blood. She became all spirit.

On returning to Marseilles she handed Fine the documents establishing the identity of her son, and the following day left for a small town in the department of the Var, where she entered an orphanage in accordance with the wish she had expressed.

CHAPTER VI.

A SPECTRE.

Two years had passed. In the first months of them Marius married Fine and took a small flat on the Cours Bonaparte. M. Martelly, who put his signature to the marriage contract, endowed the bridegroom by taking him into his business; he was no longer a clerk, but a partner who brought his intelligence and zeal with him in lieu of capital. Fine, on her side, left her kiosk on the Cours Saint Louis, so as to be able to give her whole attention to her household; but as she wished to continue earning her living she made artificial flowers in her spare moments, and was so nimble with her fingers that her work looked almost natural. Sometimes, however, when people complimented her on her ability, she sighed, thought with regret of her fresh, sweet-smelling nose-gays of other days, and answered:

"Ah! but if you saw the roses of the good God!"

These two years were twenty-four months of peaceful happiness. The young household lived liked birds in a

warm, secluded nest of moss. Days followed days, one as happy as the other, full of delightful monotony, and the pair would have liked this sort of life to go on for ever, each hour bringing back to them the same kisses and the same joys. In the morning Marius left for his office; Fine placed herself before her small table twisting the stalks, crumpling the petals and deftly producing delicate muslin flowers with her agile fingers. Then of an evening they both went out for a walk along the noisy streets, and reached the sea-shore near Endoume. They had discovered a corner among the rocks there, where they seated themselves alone, facing the blue immensity; night set in, and they gazed with emotion at the great sea which had betrothed them at Saint Henri, in the old days. It was thus they came to thank it, and to seek in its deep voice an air suitable for their love. When they returned the bonds of their affection were drawn even closer than before.

Every Sunday they had a day in the country which was spent at Saint Barnabé, setting out in the early morning and returning late at night. The visit they paid to the child of Blanche and Philippe, was a sort of pilgrimage for them; but, apart from that, they enjoyed themselves there under the mulberry trees at the door. The warm country air filled them with lively gaiety, they had enormous appetites and recovered all the turbulency of youth. Whilst he talked to the gardener she gambolled on the floor with the baby, amid peals of laughter and all sorts of charming foolishness.

In accordance with the desire expressed by Blanche, they had acted as godfather and godmother to her son and had given him the name of Joseph. When Joseph called the young woman: "Mamma", she sighed and clasped him in her arms for she loved him as if she had really been his mother.

Joseph was growing up, charming and refined, like a child of love. He could already walk alone, and lisp a few words in that delightful prating of the baby age. For the moment, Marius and Fine confined themselves to loving him fondly, later on they would see to making a

man of him, they said, and to assuring him the position to which he was entitled. But the young household were not so wrapped up in their own enjoyment as to forget the fugitive, that poor Philippe who was living alone and disconsolate in Italy. His brother had been taking active steps to obtain his pardon so that he might return to Marseilles and begin life again, a life of work. Unfortunately the obstacles were numerous, and he encountered a stubborn resistance that put his most energetic efforts to naught. However, he did not despair of success, and felt, even, sure, that one day or other, he would attain his end.

In the meantime he confined himself to exchanging a few letters with Philippe, urging him to be courageous, and above all not to give way to his craving to return to France. If he were guilty of that imprudence all might be lost. Philippe answered that he was at the end of his tether and was dying of weariness. This despair and impatience alarmed Marius who went so far as to invent untruths to keep the fugitive in exile. He promised him he would have his pardon in a month, then when the month was at an end, he assured him it would certainly be for the following month, and for more than a year he had in this way made him take patience.

One Sunday evening, just as Fine and Marius had returned from Saint Barnabé, their neighbours informed them that a man had called to see them several times in the course of the afternoon. As they were retiring for the night, after having vainly endeavoured to think who this strange visitor could be, they heard a slight knock at their door. Marius, who opened it, was stupefied.

"What, you!" he exclaimed in despair.

Fine hastened to join him, and recognised Philippe who, after having embraced them both, answered:

"Yes, it is I, I should have died over there. I was obliged to return at any price."

"What folly!" continued Marius, quite upset. "I was certain of your pardon. But now I will not answer for anything."

"Go along with you! I will keep in hiding until you

have succeeded. I could not live away from you, from my child any longer. I was absolutely ill."

"But why not have advised me? I would have taken some precautions."

"Ah! But if I had told you of my intention, you would have persuaded me not to return to Marseilles. I have done a headstrong thing, but you who are a sensible man, will repair everything;" and, turning to Fine, he said eagerly:

"How is my little Joseph?"

Then the danger the fugitive ran was forgotten. After the surprise and dissatisfaction of the first few moments came the unbosoming of their hearts, a long affectionate conversation which was prolonged until three o'clock in the morning. Philippe related his misfortunes and sufferings in exile. Here and there he had given French lessons for a livelihood, avoiding staying long in any one place, and living alone and unknown.

When he had related in detail all he had gone through, his brother, who was deeply moved, avoided reproaching him with his return; on the contrary, he racked his brain to find a means of hiding him at Marseilles, so that he could await his pardon and be near his child.

Marius, first of all, insisted on Philippe being shaved, a performance that completely changed the young man's appearance. Then he made him dress in a coarse suit of clothes, and found a place for him as stevedore with Cadet, his wife's brother, who had succeeded Sauvaire.

It was understood that Cadet would allow Philippe to loiter about the port, without making him do any work. But after the second day the improvised stevedore begged for some employment to help him to pass his time, and he was placed at the head of a squad of workers.

Things remained thus for several months, Marius expecting, from day to day, to obtain his brother's liberty. As to Philippe he was quite happy. Every evening, he went to Saint Barnabé and the pleasure he found there, playing with his son, helped him to forget his troubles.

He had already been a year at Marseilles, when one evening on reaching the gardener's cottage he fancied he

saw a tall, thin man behind him who had been following him from the port, but little Joseph's merry welcome soon made him forget the incident. Had he turned his head the next day, he would have found the same tall, thin man following and watching him again.

CHAPTER VII.

M. DE CAZALIS YEARNNS FOR JOSEPH.

DURING the three years that had elapsed since the birth of the son of Blanche and Philippe, important changes had taken place in the existence of M. de Cazalis. He had not been re-elected deputy at the last elections and had come to reside at Marseilles. His defeat, due to the unpopularity he had earned among the people, owing to his quarrels with the Cayols, did not seem to affect him a great deal. The truth was that he preferred attending to his own affairs rather than to those of his country; he had enough cares at home, enough work to do to parry the blows with which he was threatened, without troubling himself with a mandate that would rivet him to Paris for several months in the year.

He took up his abode at his mansion on the Cours Bonaparte and acted in such a manner as to make himself forgotten by the whole city. He gave up going out in his carriage and splashing the peaceful tradesmen; he did his best to pass unperceived, and succeeded so well that in a short time he was quite unknown to most people. His dream was to secure his peace of mind as soon as possible, and then proceed to Paris and devour his niece's fortune in grand style.

If he led the sad and retired life that he did, it was because his instinct of prudence urged him to study the position and secure immunity, before laying a finger on what did not belong to him. He had a mad desire to satisfy himself at once, but was afraid. He was willing enough to despoil Blanche, on condition he would never be branded as a thief.

When he had succeeded in being forgotten, when he was shut up in his mansion like a simple bourgeois, fond of retirement and silence, he planted his batteries. He found himself in the centre of the intrigue he meant to direct, and was in hopes that by his nonchalant attitude he had dispelled the distrust of his adversaries. At the bottom of his heart, his most ardent desire was to discover the whereabouts of his niece's boy and obtain possession of him. Then only would he be able to grasp the fortune that was lying idle in his hands. But, by an effort of hypocrisy, he was able to restrain himself for nearly three years; he remained quiet, without appearing to take any steps to find out where his great nephew was hidden; and, in reality, he did not risk a single attempt, being faithful to his plan of feigned indifference.

The result of this comedy was to tranquillize Marius. The young man had imagined that the day after the babe had been carried off, M. de Cazalis would have flown into a rage, scoured Marseilles and searched everywhere else to find him. He was first of all very much surprised at the indifference of Blanche's uncle and suspected that it served to hide some trap. Then, little by little, his suspicions were dispelled and he dozed away in happy confidence, until at length he thought no more of this man who was hiding in obscurity, in order to watch his prey the better.

If M. de Cazalis was patient and made no researches, it was because he knew the Cayols could not make use of the child against him for some time. He permitted them to bring it up, counting on stealing it when it became dangerous to leave it in their hands. So long as Philippe did not return to France, so long as his son had not attained a certain age, Marius had his hands tied; it was impossible for him to create a scandal that might turn against his own brother.

To tell the truth M. de Cazalis placed great reliance on the upright and just mind of Marius, in order to bring his own affairs to a happy issue: he said to himself that the young man would never venture to compromise Blanche, and that he would sooner abandon the fortune

than do so. In any case, he had at least five years tranquillity before him.

But if he relied on the virtues of Marius, he was in absolute terror when he thought of Philippe. He felt that if he ever fell into the latter's hands he would meet with no mercy. He knew the violence, the energetic nature of the fugitive, and considered him a man who would stop at nothing when it was a question of satisfying a hatred or a vengeance. So he took certain precautions to shelter himself from that hatred in case Philippe returned to France. He earnestly desired to see him commit that imprudence; and, rather for the pleasure of having him arrested, than to escape his vindictiveness, he employed a certain Mathéus, a rascal who was devoted to him, to go to Italy and keep at the young man's heels so as to return with him in case he took it into his head to embark.

The spy acquitted himself faithfully of his mandate. He found Philippe at Genoa and from that moment never left him. When the latter returned to Marseilles, Mathéus was on the same steamer, but by chance lost sight of him during the confusion of landing, and he had to inform his employer of the presence of his enemy in the city, without being able to tell him where he was in hiding.

When M. de Cazalis learned that Philippe was at Marseilles he felt extremely uneasy, not that he feared immediate and direct vengeance, but because he imagined the young man would obstinately pursue him and make him disgorge. He desired his return to France, but on condition that he might know his hiding-place, and hand him over to the police the day after his arrival. But as he had escaped his vigilance, he imagined he was hovering round him and preparing pitfalls beneath his feet.

He lived for a year in perpetual anxiety. He watched Marius to no purpose, ordered Mathéus to follow him everywhere, but failed to find Philippe, for the two brothers had agreed that they would not meet until the pardon had been granted and they could shake hands without fear. Besides, Philippe appeared so different in his coarse garments of a stevedore, with his sunburnt hands

and face that Mathéus passed several times close to him without recognising him.

M. de Cazalis, who did not wish to take the police into his confidence, without having prepared a certain capture, was in despair at his spy's want of success. He sent him throughout Marseilles daily, making him promises that were each time more tempting, spurred on by the dread of seeing the steps he knew Marius was taking to obtain his brother's pardon, successful.

One day M. de Cazalis, who had gone down to the port, mingled with a crowd that had assembled round a wounded man. He ascertained that it was a stevedore whose foot had been crushed under an enormous case of goods. As he went nearer to him he caught sight of another stevedore who was beside the poor fellow, giving orders. This man's quick movements and loud voice made him start. He had only heard Philippe's voice once, at the time of the trial, and it had ever since been ringing in his ears.

He returned home in all haste and calling Mathéus, gave him detailed instructions. He was to make sure of this man's identity, to follow him for two or three days so as to ascertain what his habits were and the places he frequented. The pursuit commenced next morning.

The plan M. de Cazalis had formed, was as simple as it was clever. He meant to bring down two birds at one shot. He wished to kiss his little great-nephew, he thought he had left him long enough with the Cayols, and desired in his turn to have him. To find the child and steal him, he determined to make use of his father. Philippe, he felt convinced, paid frequent visits to his son: therefore he had only to follow him to discover where the little one was concealed. M. de Cazalis calculated that when he had found out this hiding-place, it would be easy to have his enemy arrested, and, at the same time, to take possession of Blanche's heir.

Two days later Mathéus informed his employer that the stevedore was indeed Philippe Cayol, and that every night he went to the cottage of a gardener, named Ayasse, at Saint Barnabé who also had charge of a child. The ex-deputy understood all, and smiled in triumph.

"At what hour does this man go to Saint Barnabé?" he asked Mathéus.

"At six o'clock in the evening," answered the latter, "and he remains there until nine o'clock."

"Good. Return here to-morrow at six. I will give you your orders."

The next day M. de Cazalis had a short interview with Mathéus. Then they set out for Saint Barnabé which they reached at seven o'clock. A couple of gendarmes accompanied them.

CHAPTER VIII.

"OPEN, IN THE NAME OF THE LAW!"

PHILIPPE had been leading a monotonous sort of life since he had been in hiding at Marseilles, and his only pleasure consisted in going to kiss his son every evening at Saint Barnabé.

Marius, out of prudence, had begged him to wait, to make these visits, until he was free, for he felt that it would have been better for father and son to be separated until the time came when they could see each other without danger to either. But he had had to give way to his brother's urgent entreaties; and he tranquillized his mind by thinking M. de Cazalis must be unaware of the presence of Philippe and his son at Marseilles.

The condemned man who visited no one, not even Marius, went every evening to the gardener's cottage and there enjoyed the only happy hours of his existence. Generally as soon as he made his appearance, the gardener and his wife took advantage of his arrival, to set out with the fruit and vegetables they grew, for Marseilles. As he was alone in the house he bolted the door and played with Joseph like a child. This relieved his mind, he forgot the past and present, to dream of a happy future. When he was there in that old house so quiet and pleasant, he forgot he was a condemned man, a wretched creature whom a gendarme could lead back handcuffed to the city; he

fancied himself a peasant, a labourer who had cultivated the land all day and was resting at night. These serene hours gave him fresh strength and appeased the disagreeable fevers that sometimes racked his frame. No one would have recognised in this bowed-down and aged-looking man, watching over a child like a devoted wet-nurse, the gay and wild young dandy with whose amorous adventures all Marseilles had been busy a few years before. Ah! misfortune is a hard school!

On the evening when M. de Cazalis and Mathéus went to Saint Barnabé accompanied by two gendarmes, Philippe had reached the cottage, as usual, at about six o'clock. The gardener and his wife were waiting to take a cartload of grapes to Marseilles. As soon as he was alone he withdrew into the room on the ground floor and shut himself up. Little Joseph was not in a mood for play: he had been running all day among the vines, and had fallen asleep on a sort of old sofa with smiling lips, all stained with the purple juice of the grape. Philippe moved about on tip-toe, so as not to disturb his slumber, and ended by seating himself opposite to him and watching him sleep in the undefined glimmer of the falling twilight.

He remained in that position for nearly an hour, silent and motionless, listening to the child's light breathing and finding immense delight in gazing on him. Two great tears which he did not feel, trickled down his cheeks.

As he sat there lost in tender ecstasy, he heard a sudden knock at the door, and it seemed to him as if hands had fallen on his shoulders to arrest him. The violent resounding blows drew him from his dream. He returned from his wanderings to his mother earth, and passed from his oblivious serenity, to the terror of every moment of his life. There, behind the door, were the gendarmes.

Half erect he listened, firmly determined not to open. He was in the habit of closing the door every evening to make believe the house was empty. Little Joseph continued to sleep, rosy and smiling. The blows redoubled, but the condemned man now observed that they were dealt by a weak and impatient hand. At the same moment

he heard the suffocating voice of a woman, stammering out in terror :

“Open, open quickly, for the love of God!”

He seemed to recognise the voice and drew back the bolts.

Fine dashed inside at a bound, out of breath and fainting, and quickly closed the door after her. Then for a minute she stood gasping, with her hands pressed against her heart and unable to speak.

Philippe gazed on her with astonishment. She had never before been to the cottage at that hour, and something very serious must have happened for her to have risked such a visit, which was compromising for her.

“What is the matter?” he inquired.

“They are there,” answered Fine, heaving a great sigh, “I saw them on the road and began running across country to get here before them.”

“Who do you mean?”

She stared at him as if surprised at his inquiry.

“Ah! yes,” she answered, “you don’t know. I came to tell you they were going to arrest you this evening.”

“Arrest me this evening!” exclaimed the young man, drawing himself up in a passion.

“This afternoon,” continued the former flower-girl, “Marius ascertained, by providential chance, that M. de Cazalis had applied for two gendarmes to make an arrest near Saint-Barnabé.”

“Always, always that man!”

“Then, Marius who came home mad with grief, sent me off here to take the child and beg you to fly.”

Philippe made a step towards the door.

“Eh! no,” exclaimed the young woman, in despair, “it is too late now. I have not come in time. I tell you they are there.”

Sobbing, she seated herself on a chair near little Joseph, and watched him sleeping, feeling quite broken down. Philippe looked round the room in search of an issue.

“And no means of safety!” he murmured. “Ah! I prefer to risk all. Give me the child. Night is falling and I shall perhaps have time to escape.”

He stooped down to take Joseph, when Fine seized hold of his hands, making an energetic sign to him to listen. Then, in the terrible silence, they heard the sound of footsteps before the house, and almost at the same moment the stocks of muskets came in contact with the door, whilst a stern voice shouted:

“Open, in the name of the law!”

Philippe turned ghastly pale and slid down on the sofa beside his son.

“All is lost,” he murmured.

“Don’t open,” said Fine, in an undertone. “Marius impressed upon me, in case you were unable to fly, that you were to put as many impediments as possible to your arrest, so as to gain time.”

“Why did not he come himself?”

“I don’t know. He did not tell me what his plans were. He ran off on his side while I took a fly to get here.”

“He didn’t tell you if he would come and give us assistance?”

“No. I repeat he is mad with grief. I only heard him murmur: ‘I hope to heaven I may succeed.’”

At that moment, the stocks of the muskets were heard knocking more violently at the door and the terrifying cry resounded:

“Open, in the name of the law!”

Fine placed her finger on her lips to tell Philippe to preserve absolute silence. Each blow, each word made them start and increased their alarm. Little Joseph continued sleeping between them, but in an uneasy and agitated slumber.

The gendarmes had already been knocking and shouting for five minutes, and in the end one of them said to M. de Cazalis that the cottage appeared empty, and they had no power to burst open the door.

“If we were sure your man was inside,” he added, “we would soon send the lock flying; but we cannot run the risk of such a thing, with the chance of not finding him there.”

“The man is certainly there,” exclaimed Mathéus, “I saw him enter.”

"I will answer for everything," added M. de Cazalis, "I'd be responsible for what you do."

The two gendarmes shook their heads, knowing perfectly well that they alone would be punished if they broke into a house. They only had orders to arrest the person pointed out to them and were not inclined to go beyond their instructions.

M. de Cazalis was in despair at their irresolution and at seeing them unwilling to proceed any further, when a voice was heard inside the dwelling.

"Do you hear?" he said. "You can see the house is not empty and that our man is within!"

It was little Joseph who had just opened his eyes. Frightened at finding himself in the dark and at the sound of loud voices, he had burst out crying. Fine, in alarm, had endeavoured in vain to quiet him with kisses, but unsuccessfully. The son betrayed the father.

The gendarmes knocked again and shouted out:

"If you don't open, we'll burst in the door?"

At the violent blows from the stocks of the muskets against the wood, Philippe understood that the door would not resist for very long. He got up and lit the lamp, no longer afraid of the light betraying him. Joseph terrified by the battering outside, which shook the whole house, screamed louder than ever, and Fine, who had risen and was nursing him in her arms, walked backwards and forwards in despair, powerless to calm him.

"Oh! let him cry," Philippe said to her. "They know I am here now."

And he went and kissed his child, murmuring in a broken voice:

"Poor little darling!"

As he looked at him his eyes were filled with great tears. When he had kissed him a last time, he quickly advanced towards the door.

Fine stopped him.

"What! Are you going to open to them?" she inquired in agony.

"Eh! yes," he answered. "Don't you hear? The wood's giving way and the lock's ready to fly off. Ayasse

may return at any moment, and besides, now that flight is impossible, I won't have the door damaged any further.”

“For pity's sake, wait a little longer. Let us gain time.”

“Gain time. Why? Isn't it all up?”

“No, I've faith in Marius. He impressed on me to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of your arrest, and I implore you to conform to his entreaty. It is a question of your own safety.”

Philippe shook his head.

“They will make me pay dearly for every minute's resistance,” he said. “It's better not to struggle uselessly.”

Fine saw that despair had transformed him into a coward, and she knew not what to say to instil energy into him. All at once she had an idea:

“But,” she exclaimed, “what will become of Joseph? As soon as you are arrested, these men will take him.”

The young man, who already had a hand almost on a bolt, turned round pale and trembling and returned to Fine's side.

“Didn't you tell me Cazalis was there with the gendarmes?” he inquired.

“Yes,” she answered.

He turned very pale again, and stammered out in a choking voice.

“Oh! I understand it all now. Wretched egotist that I am, I was only thinking of my own safety and my child was in greater danger than myself! You are right, they only come to arrest me here, in order to steal Joseph. What is there to be done? Good heavens!”

At that moment such a violent blow was given to the door, that the wood cracked, as if it were about to split in two, and Philippe gazed round about him bewildered.

“No issue!” he continued, “and in a few moments the door will be broken in. What can be done, good heavens! to escape them!”

The blows became more and more redoubtable. One felt that the gendarmes were becoming furious at the long resistance. Philippe remained for a few seconds with

his head between his hands trying to think, to discover a means of escape. Then, in a low and rapid voice he said:

"I am of your opinion. We must try and gain time. Marius has always been my guardian angel."

"Let us barricade the door with the furniture," exclaimed the young woman.

"No, that's not advisable. Open resistance will only hasten on events."

"What are you going to do then?"

"Open the door and give myself up. But before doing so, you must run to the loft with Joseph, and hide yourself as well as possible; in the meanwhile I will arrange to make the details of my arrest last as long as I can, so as to give my brother time to help us."

"And if they take you away at once, and if I am left at the mercy of these men?"

"Then everything will, indeed, be against us. However, there is no time to argue, and there is no choice. Do you hear? The door is giving way. For love of heaven hurry upstairs and hide yourself well!"

He pushed Fine towards the staircase; then, when she had disappeared in the dark, he went and drew back the bolts.

CHAPTER IX.

PARDON! PARDON!

PHILIPPE had taken the precaution of putting out the lamp before opening the door, and the gendarmes who were on the point of rushing forward, stopped short on the threshold, fearing that the darkness might conceal some snare. Perhaps the trap door of a cellar was gaping open before them or perhaps they would be attacked from behind, as soon as they entered. The mass of darkness that expanded before them struck terror into their hearts.

"We must have a light," one of them murmured. "We cannot look for and find a man in this obscurity."

"I have no lucifer matches on me," said the other.

M. de Cazalis was in despair, he had not foreseen this new obstacle. Night was like an impenetrable wall which still separated him from Philippe.

"Are you afraid?" he exclaimed.

And in a moment of anger, he gave a push to the gendarmes who thus advanced a few steps into the room. Philippe who had placed himself upright against the wall at the entrance, dashed forward, passed behind them and found himself outside, after having knocked Mathéus almost over.

"Help!" the latter yelled, "the man's escaping!"

The gendarmes were right about face in an instant. The young man had come to a standstill at a few yards from the house. He could have run away, but he thought no longer of himself, all his mind was taken up with his child. If he had put out the lamp and pretended to make off it was merely to gain time. With crossed arms and disdainful bearing, he said in a loud voice:

"What do you want with me? Why have you obliged me to open the door?"

The gendarmes had sprung forward and each had seized him by a wrist.

"Let me go," he exclaimed, with violence. "You can see, very well, I am giving myself up voluntarily. Had I wished to escape I could have been far away by now. Speak, what do you want?"

"We have orders to arrest you," they said, taking their hands off him under the influence of the imperious tone of his voice.

"Good," he continued, "I will follow you when you have shewn me the warrant concerning me. Let us go in."

He entered the room, feigning not to see either Mathéus or M. de Cazalis. When he had relit the lamp, and the former deputy and his instrument appeared, he turned towards the gendarmes and said in a mocking voice:

"Do these gentlemen belong to the police?"

The nobleman received the phrase right in the face like a cut from a whip. He was conscious of the unworthy part he was playing, and the silent anger that had been raging within him burst out.

“What are you waiting for?” he cried. “Gag the villain, pinion him. Ah! rascal, so I’ve found you, and this time you’ll not escape me!”

He was foaming, he asked for the handcuffs to put them himself on the prisoner. The latter looked at him with withering contempt. The gendarmes had given him the warrant that had been issued against him and he was reading it slowly, seeking an excuse for delay. In the meanwhile, Mathéus had disappeared. He had lit a wax taper he had on him and had slipped into the staircase. He was going to execute the orders of M. de Cazalis who had promised him a good reward if he succeeded in stealing little Joseph amidst the confusion of Philippe’s arrest.

Mathéus was a prudent man who did nothing lightly. For two days he had been studying the habits at the gardener’s house: he knew that the latter and his wife must be at Marseilles, and he calculated in his mind that Philippe, hearing the gendarmes, had without doubt hidden his son in a room above. He expected to find the child alone and to be able to take him without difficulty.

He inspected the rooms on the first floor and found nothing. He burst open a door that was locked, searched in every corner and acquired the certitude that Joseph was not there.

Then, he decided he would go up to the loft.

The door only closed with a latch. Mathéus opened it and advanced a few steps on the straw which went up in a heap to the tiles; he held the taper high, looked from a distance in all the corners, not daring to advance for fear of setting fire to the place. He could find nothing. There was a quantity of things in the place impossible to describe in detail: old caved-in barrels, agricultural implements of no further utility, refuse without a name, encumbering the flooring, and throwing great dark shadows here and there.

Mathéus thought that Philippe could not have hidden his son among all this rubbish covered with dust and cobwebs, and did not pursue his search further, but returned

to the first floor, where he made another minute inspection. He opened the articles of furniture, pulled up the curtains, looked everywhere. There was no child. Then he sat down and began to think. The rascal was in the habit of reasoning on all occasions, and of always acting in accordance with the strict laws of logic.

His reasoning was short and his conclusion unanswerable. He had heard the child cry, therefore he must be in the house; if he was not to be found on the first floor, he must naturally be in the loft. He had no doubt made an imperfect search.

He returned to the loft.

As soon as he entered, he placed his taper on an old watering-pot so as not to set fire to anything. He had thought for a moment of lighting the straw at the risk of burning the place down. The child was there for sure, and he had a vague idea that M. de Cazalis would be delighted at the poor little creature's death. He had only to let the taper fall and Blanche's heir would be roasted. But he was afraid of displaying too much zeal, of going beyond his instructions. His master had asked for the child alive and he couldn't decently take it to him dead.

He began to search in the straw, to rummage among the old barrels. He proceeded slowly, making sure no corner escaped him, expecting at every moment to put his hand on a warm body.

The taper placed on the watering-pot, cast a yellow, vacillating light over the loft and afforded him very poor assistance in his search. When he had reached the end of the loft, he suddenly stopped, hearing the sound of restrained breathing. He smiled triumphantly. The noise came from a sort of buttress formed by trusses of hay piled up at some distance from the wall.

Mathéus stretched forward his head and hands, but when he had cast a glance into the hiding-place, he brought his hands down beside him in surprise. Fine had suddenly risen up before him, holding little Joseph against her bosom. The child was fast asleep and smiling in his slumber.

For nearly a quarter of an hour the young girl had

been listening to the smothered tread of Mathéus, and during that time, had been a prey to most terrible anxiety. She almost betrayed herself when he appeared in the loft the first time. Then, when he went down, she breathed, thinking herself saved. And there he was back again, and had discovered her! She was lost, he was about to tear Joseph from her arms.

Erect, all of a tremor, determined she would sooner be assassinated than part with the child, she stared him in the face.

Mathéus was at first stupefied. He did not expect to find this young woman, whom he did not know and who appeared to be the child's mother. Then, the wretch gave a smile of ill-omen. After all, he preferred to have to deal with this young woman than with Philippe. With a push he would tumble her over on the hay and easily take the child from her. Fine no doubt read his thoughts in his eyes, for she put her back against the wall and stiffened her legs ready for the struggle.

They did not exchange a word. The taper was dimly burning. He stretched out his hand, she closed her eyes, thinking herself already dead, when a sound, increasing as it proceeded, rose from the room where Philippe was still with the gendarmes. A well-beloved voice which the young woman recognised, was crying: "Pardon! Pardon!" amid outbursts of joy and triumph.

Fine felt her courage return.

"Do you hear?" she asked Mathéus. "Heaven has come to our assistance. It's for you, rascal, that the gendarmes have brought the handcuffs."

Mathéus in alarm, forgot Fine and the child, thinking only of his safety. He ran to the door of the loft and listened. Then he began thinking where he could fly to in case things took an unfavourable turn.

Down below, Philippe, after reading the warrant for his arrest, had to give himself up to the gendarmes. He succeeded, however, in delaying his departure under pretence that he could not quit the gardener's house, without leaving him a few words of explanation. The truth was that he had seen Mathéus disappear by the

staircase and was trembling for Fine and his child. He counted no longer on Marius, he simply wanted to await the gardener's return so as not to leave the house at the mercy of M. de Cazalis.

The gendarmes allowed him to write a few lines and then told him he must set out. He gazed about him in despair and only saw the ex-deputy who was sneering.

"Well!" exclaimed the latter, "so you're muzzled! You won't carry off any more heiresses, you won't cause any more scandal in families. Ah! it'll be a curious sight to see the gallant Philippe Cayol fastened to the pillory!"

Philippe did not answer—out of disdain and so as not to be tempted to smack the man in the face. Since he had been there, he feigned to ignore his presence. Whilst M. de Cazalis insulted him, a gendarme put on the handcuffs.

"Off we go!" he said.

And Philippe was obliged to advance towards the door. He felt dreadful agony at the throat and almost burst out sobbing. Just at that moment, as the door was open, a joyful shout resounded outside, and a man walked in repeating: "Pardon! Pardon!"

It was Marius. Not having been able to get a fly, he had run all the way from Marseilles. He drew a paper from beneath his dusty clothes and presented it to the gendarmes. This paper announced the pardon which the King had granted to Philippe.

The document had been promised to the condemned man's brother for more than a month, and as chance would have it, it arrived at the very moment when M. de Cazalis was exerting his last vestiges of influence to prevail on the authorities to act. If Marius had not proceeded at once to Saint Barnabé with Fine, it was because he wanted to see once more whether the pardon had not come to hand.

The gendarmes read the all-powerful letter and bowed before it. Their errand was over: it only remained for them to withdraw. M. de Cazalis, with haggard features, terrified at this unforeseen issue, watched them leave

with anger, as if they had been working for the liberty of his enemy. He was thinking in the folly of his despair, whether there was not some means of compelling them to take Philippe off to prison in spite of all. Marius had embraced his brother on entering, saying to him :

“You are free. Heaven be praised ! I’ve come in time !”

And Philippe had remained for a moment motionless, choking, not daring to understand. Then he suddenly darted upstairs. He had just thought of the man who had gone up there to rob him of his son.

Mathéus heard the sound of his footsteps. In terror, understanding that he was threatened with danger, he looked rapidly about him for something to assist him in flight. Hanging from a pulley before the window of the loft, which stood wide open, was a piece of cord. He grasped it at the risk of falling and slid down, almost falling on the head of M. de Cazalis, who was leaving with an oath on his lips, and rage in his heart.

When the ex-deputy saw Mathéus without the child, he almost struck him. His expedition had entirely failed, he had not secured either father or son.

Fine, rescued from the brutality of Mathéus, hastened downstairs with Philippe to the room below. And there the two brothers and young woman, mad with joy, smothered little Joseph with kisses.

“Now, we are strong !” exclaimed Marius. “We are no longer at the disadvantage of having a criminal sentence hanging over our heads, and can work openly for the happiness of this child.”

CHAPTER X.

THE INSURRECTION OF FEBRUARY, 1848.

THE two brothers on awakening the next morning experienced considerable delight at finding themselves together and free of all fear. They had brought Joseph away with them the evening before, after having thanked Ayasse, the gardener, and handsomely rewarded him.

Philippe and his son slept at the little lodging of the young married couple. During the night Marius who was very much upset and unable to close his eyes, thought out the plan of a new existence, and as soon as the family were assembled round the breakfast-table proceeded to explain it.

"Come," he said, "let us speak seriously. We must decide what we are going to do with this child, and what Philippe will do."

Philippe at once became grave and attentive. He had often thought of the life he would lead when it would be no longer necessary to keep in hiding; and he felt it was his duty to work for his son and renounce his ambitious ideas and follies.

"The child," continued Marius, smiling, and looking at Fine, "will easily find a mother."

The young woman was holding little Joseph on her knees and encouraging him to eat his bread and milk with all sorts of caresses. When she heard what her husband said, she exclaimed:

"A mother! Here she is! He was entrusted to me, given to me. Is not that so, Philippe? It's I who am his mother. As we have no children, I'll take this one and I'll not part with him. He will always stay with me and you'll see how fond I shall be of him!"

Philippe who was very much affected at these words pressed the hands of the former flower-girl warmly. The thought of bringing up his son had caused him much anxiety, and he had often inquired of himself how he could attend to a boy of four. Fine's offer relieved him of his embarrassed position: he would not be separated from Joseph and the child would have a devoted mother to watch over him.

"The child is provided for," continued Marius, laughing, "and I will undertake to provide for the father; but before we go any further, tell me, Philippe, what your ideas are."

"I wish to work," replied the young man, "I want to make you forget my follies, and to assure for myself a calm and happy future."

"That is perfect. You renounce your dreams of wealth, and consent to be a poor fellow like I am?"

"Yes."

"Then I can give you what you want. You must cast aside the stevedore's blouse. I will offer you a modest position which will enable you to live without being a drag upon anyone."

"I accept all, in anticipation. I confide in you with my eyes closed, being sure that whatever you do will conduce to my happiness."

"Very well! I am going to place you immediately with my employer, M. Martelly. For more than six months I have been reserving a post for you there, that will bring you in eighteen hundred francs a year. Believe me, my dear brother, remain obscure, do not seek to bear the sway and we will enjoy happy times together."

The two brothers went to the ship-owner, who gave Philippe a kind welcome and seemed delighted to assist him by engaging him in his employ.

"My dear Marius," said he, gaily, "put this young man where you like. There is a great deal of work to do here, and we require an active and intelligent staff. I like those who serve me faithfully."

Marius entrusted his brother with a part of the correspondence, which was considerable, and from that moment Philippe commenced a peaceful existence. He passed the daytime at his office and in the evening enjoyed the tranquillity of the home of the young couple, taking Joseph on his knees and playing with him for hours together. Fine had been able to rent an extra room on the fourth floor from the landlord, and made it comfortable for the young man whose life was in common with that of the young household; he lodged and took his meals with his brother, never went out, and seemed to care for nothing beyond this domestic felicity.

This peaceful and affectionate life lasted for several weeks, and to see such an united and happy family, no one would ever have thought that it had been a victim to the most violent commotion a few months before.

Sometimes, however, Philippe's voice took the brief and

irritated accents of former days. When he thought of M. de Cazalis the fever seized him again, and he spoke of making Blanche's uncle disgorge.

"We are cowards," he said one evening to Marius, "we don't know how to avenge ourselves. I ought to go and slap that man in the face and demand my son's fortune."

Marius, whose calm and well-balanced mind enabled him to take a more sober view of the position, was quite alarmed at his brother's sudden outbursts of passion.

"And what good would it do," he answered, "if you were to slap your enemy in the face? He would have you imprisoned again, that is all."

"But that man's a thief! He's keeping money that does not belong to him; he's perhaps spending it for his own purposes. Ah! you're a happy fellow, Marius, to be able to think of such things without getting in a rage. For my part I feel inclined to wrest this property, which by right should go to Joseph, away from him."

"I beg you not to do any more headstrong things. We are living peacefully enough at present. Do not spoil our happiness."

"Then you want me to renounce on behalf of my child, his mother's inheritance?"

"Eh! I prefer that you should renounce this inheritance, at least for the moment, rather than trouble our life again. Let us remain on the defensive and not attack. We are too weak, and shall be smashed at the first shock."

"I would like to see my son wealthy and powerful. I feel ambitious for him if not for myself."

"Your son is happy, we love him and will bring him up as an honest man. Believe me, he wants nothing, there would perhaps be more reason to pity him if you succeeded in making him a rich heir."

Conversations such as these frequently occurred between Philippe and Marius. The latter felt that M. de Cazalis was too powerful to be attacked with any likelihood of success; he understood that the former deputy would assume the offensive at the first opportunity, and he wished to reserve all his power for the defence. His most earnest desire was to make Blanche's uncle forget the existence of Joseph and Philippe.

Besides, he was urged by many reasons to preach disinterestedness to his brother. He feared that the latter on becoming wealthy would go crazy again. What he was dreaming of, moreover, for his nephew, was the same tranquil existence of a clerk as his own, and he did not think that he could prepare him a more agreeable future.

He frequently said to himself: "This child will be poor and happy as I am, he will find a Fine who will afford him the same pleasure as I enjoy." At the bottom of his heart he had decided that he would never claim a sou from M. de Cazalis.

When Philippe pressed him too much he spoke to him of Blanche, and said that a scandal would kill that poor girl, for M. de Cazalis would not consent to being deprived of several hundreds of thousands of francs without revolutionizing all Marseilles.

It was thus that he restrained his brother, and prevented him from making a scene which might have caused irreparable misfortune.

Briefly, Marius proved to Philippe that the time had not arrived to be avenged and claim the inheritance, and from that moment the existence of the family was even more peaceful. They had only one anxiety, they felt M. de Cazalis hovering round them in the dark, and they took every precaution to protect little Joseph against the attempts they dreaded.

In this way they reached the commencement of February. Marius had his mind at ease, he was pleased to see his brother put up with an obscure and modest mode of life, and believed him for ever cured of his ambitious dreams, There was nothing in the young man's conduct to alarm him, he was saying to himself that he had overcome his evil genius, when all at once Philippe took to going out alone and to absenting himself from his office for entire days.

Marius trembled at the thought of their happiness being disturbed. He followed his brother in order to ascertain where he went, and he learnt that he was a member of a secret society, which, subject to impulsion coming no doubt from Paris, was actively at work propagating Repub-

lican ideas. This discovery upset him, he was in despair again at seeing his brother compromise himself and supply M. de Cazalis with arms which he might turn to terrible account. When he ventured to sermonize the conspirator, the latter answered:

“Listen, I promised you not to be guilty of any follies on my own account, but I had no intention in doing so, of renouncing my own opinions. The people’s time has come and I should be a man unworthy of consideration if I were not to labour for what I believe to be the good of all.”

And he added with a smile:

“In future I shall have but one love and her name will be ‘Liberty’.”

Marius endeavoured in vain to keep him at home in the evening beside little Joseph. He would listen to nothing, and the young household were obliged to submit in silence and despair to the ruin of their happiness.

The truth was that a peaceful life did not suit Philippe. He had been able to live for two months in bourgeois tranquillity, but he now began to feel sick at heart. What he required was violent excitement, an existence full of danger and agitation, and he dashed with delight into the peril offered by a revolution that was imminent. He had always been a man of action and an ultra democrat. Embittered by suffering, having to avenge himself of the nobility, he accepted the hope of an insurrection with lively joy. And so, he resumed his blunt manner, made himself the leader of a party, urged the working classes on blindly to revolt and prepared the indigent population for the barricades that he saw in perspective.

On Friday, 25th February, a thunder-clap burst upon Marseilles. News came of the overthrow of Louis Philippe and the proclamation of the Republic at Paris.

The city was astounded. This population of commercial people who were conservatives by instinct, having no care beyond their material interests, was entirely devoted to the dynasty of the Orleans who for fifteen years had favoured, in a large measure, the development of commerce and industry.

The opinion predominating at Marseilles was that the best government was that which allows speculators the greatest liberty of action. Consequently the inhabitants were greatly alarmed at the announcement of a crisis which would naturally put a stop to business and bring about numerous bankruptcies by causing the credit on which most of the commercial houses alone existed, to be stopped.

Under these circumstances Marseilles received news of the Republic as a deplorable commercial disaster. The city felt wounded at heart, in its prosperity, by the insurrectional movement at Paris. The majority were in despair at the idea of losing the five-franc pieces they had hoarded up, and there were but few who felt a tremor at the word "Liberty" or whom it drew from the heavy slumber of wealth.

Philippe had been too confident when he thought he could sow and develop Republican ideas among his fellow townsmen. He exerted himself to do so with all the strength of his nature, dreaming wide awake and working hard to realize his dreams. If he had made a better study of the people among whom he lived, if he had possessed the necessary coolness to judge men and things, he would have renounced the idea of raising the standard of liberalism and have prudently remained quiet.

The Republican party, to tell the truth, did not exist; there was no connection between the liberal bourgeois class and the people: the latter remained on the lowest stage, without leaders, without any well-defined tendencies, and with no courage to act alone; the bourgeois class were satisfied with a little reasonable liberty, prepared for their use. The few drawing-room republicans who uttered their fine phrases here and there, were simple babblers who did not understand the modern ideas of the various classes of society, and who merely took advantage of the new state of things to make themselves prominent.

Opposed to these weak and disunited Republican elements, were two powerful camps: the Legitimists who were laughing in the sleeve at the overthrow of Louis Philippe, hoping to take advantage of the disturbance to seize the

reins of power again, and the Conservatives, the crowd of commercial men who clamoured for peace at any cost, whoever were the master, a legitimate King or an Usurper. The latter only hoped ardently for one liberty: the liberty to earn millions.

If Marseilles had dared, it would perhaps have made a counter-revolution. Compelled to submit to events, it confined itself to opposing the new government with sullen reaction. It accepted the Republic, from the first moment, with distrust, and endeavoured to lessen the effects of the new order of things as much as possible. The Conservative and Legitimist elements still dominated the city, and made it a very active centre of opposition.

At times, when Philippe was not led away by excitement, he could see clearly that he and his, would never succeed in making Marseilles a Republican city, and he then experienced great despair and anger. For some time he took to journalism; but he soon understood that the flaming articles he published were not even read by the frightened swarm of commercial men and that his enthusiasm was thrown away. He then saw that action was preferable to journalism.

One of the measures that made him despair the most was the formation of a National Guard selected exclusively among the aristocratic bourgeois of Marseilles. This National Guard was evidently destined to keep the people in check. He would have liked to see the poor admitted to its ranks as well as the wealthy, so that the guard of the city might be entrusted to a generality of citizens, to a body honestly animated with liberal sentiments.

The people alarmed the Conservatives who armed the bourgeois class so as to create an antagonistic feeling between the two, and to set one against the other if circumstances permitted. It was simply preparing civil war. The corporation of stevedores, was the only element among the labouring classes, that was admitted into the ranks, because it was no doubt thought that the members of this corporation, who were in the pay, as it were, of the merchants who employed them, would consent to fight against their fellows, the other workers, the populace whose name alone caused alarm.

Philippe energetically refused to belong to the National Guard.

"I shall remain with the people," he exclaimed in public. "If ever they are attacked, if their rights are not respected, I shall advise them to arm also and will fight with them."

From Friday 25th to Tuesday 29th Marseilles could not decide on proclaiming the Republic. The authorities of the former régime remained at their post and the entire city was anxious and ill at ease. The Prefect and Mayor affirmed that they were without news from Paris. Feeling there was great peril in leaving the power in the hands of the servants of the former King, the Republicans made several manifestations without effect. Reaction was already commencing and the Conservatives would not abandon the position without being certain there was no further hope. Monday night was reached thus. A multitude of workmen assembled on the Cannebière, were to march to the Town Hall in a body, with torches in their hands and a flag at their head, to obtain a formal promise that the new government would be publicly proclaimed on the following morning.

During these five days of anxiety, Philippe was in a terrible state of excitement. He did not go to his office, returned home late, quite upset with the violent emotions of the day, and brought angry and threatening language into the sad and distressed young household.

Fine and Marius gazed on him in despair, convinced that he was going to his ruin, and unable to stop him at the brink of the precipice.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH MATHÉUS BECOMES A REPUBLICAN.

WHEN M. de Cazalis' temper had calmed down on the day following his expedition to the cottage of Ayasse, the gardener, he was seized with absolute terror. He felt himself in the power of his enemies: now that Philippe had obtained his pardon, the Cayols would no doubt track him without pity.

He allowed Mathéus to be a witness of his alarm. Not knowing on whom to vent the rage that his powerlessness aroused within him, he overwhelmed his agent with reproaches, reviled him and said that if he had not stolen Joseph, it must be because he was in the pay of Marius.

Mathéus received the abuse philosophically and shrugged his shoulders.

“Very good! continue!” he said, impudently, “call me a villain, if that relieves you. At heart you know I am devoted to you, because you pay me far more liberally than those beggars Cayol could ever do. Instead of getting irritable, it would be wiser to think over the position and come to a decision.”

The rascal's self-possession calmed down M. de Cazalis and he then confided to his accomplice, that he had a very good mind to fly, and go and live in peace in Italy or England. It was the simplest and most expeditious way of escaping the annoyances with which he was threatened. They would certainly not go and demand the accounts of his guardianship in a foreign country.

Mathéus listened to his master and shook his head. This idea of running away did not suit his views at all. To complete his fortune he required M. de Cazalis to remain at Marseilles, so that he might speculate on his fright and get all the money he could out of him. He certainly felt that the latter was right in wishing to take to his heels, which meant safety, but he cared very little about the safety of M. de Cazalis, and did not mind if he compromised him, from the moment it was to his interest to launch him into a struggle from which the issue was doubtful. What he desired above everything, was not to lose his pay as a spy. He therefore pleaded warmly against flight, and he was fortunate enough to find good reasons to support his argument.

“Why fly?” he said. “Have you abandoned the idea of avenging yourself then? There is no reason to despair. Your enemies are trembling before you and will never dare attack you openly. There are a thousand things that bind them to silence. Come, you are very wrong to be alarmed. In your place I would remain and conquer.

I would openly assume the offensive. Those idiots are sure to make a mistake. We will take advantage of everything, and the time will come when we shall have them again in our power. You have accused me of clumsiness because I did not succeed in bringing you the little one. I am not clumsy and I have a return match to play. On the word of an honest man, you shall have the child. The deuce! Acting together we can make anything we engage in succeed."

He spoke at length, cleverly appealed to his employer's pride and vengeance, and ended by persuading him to remain and continue the struggle. Then there was a long conference between them.

Before doing anything M. de Cazalis desired Mathéus to make an effort with Blanche. He was to endeavour to obtain her signature to various documents which would deprive her son of a large part of his inheritance.

He set out on his errand firmly decided not to get anything signed, for if he acted in accordance with his master's desire, that would simplify matters too much, and his services would no longer be required, as when the documents were once signed his master could dispense with his assistance. He arranged in such a manner that Blanche firmly refused her signature.

M. de Cazalis was exasperated at this refusal, and only dreamed of vengeance. He spoke of nothing less than having the Cayols knocked on the head.

It was at that degree of irritation that Mathéus wished to see him arrive, and he took advantage of it to make him give him full powers. He then begged him not to meddle in the affair, so as not to compromise himself. Every evening he called and made him a report which was true or false; he kept him informed of the acts and attitude of his enemies, calming him, irritating him according to his requirements, and always promising him prompt victory.

Two months passed. M. de Cazalis was beginning to get impatient, saying the Cayols were too circumspect, and that such people would never make a mistake, when one evening Mathéus entered his drawing-room, rubbing his hands with the air of a conqueror.

"What's the news?" inquired the ex-deputy impatiently of his accomplice.

Mathéus did not answer immediately. He had seated himself comfortably in an armchair, and, with his hands crossed over his stomach, sat blinking his eyes with a sanctimonious air. This lackey treated the illustrious descendant of the Cazalis as an equal.

"What do you think of the Republic?" he abruptly inquired of his master, in a bantering tone. "It's a fine invention of the human mind, is it not?"

The master shrugged his shoulders. He tolerated this rascal's impudence, and the latter took secret delight in wounding him.

"You are aware that the monarchy is dead and buried," continued the tatterdemalion in the same bantering tone. "We have been citizens for the last twenty-four hours and I feel inclined to address you in the second person."

M. de Cazalis had been following political events during the last few months with much indifference. He had learned on the previous evening of the overthrow of Louis Philippe, without even paying attention to the news. Formerly, when he was deputy in the opposition ranks, and sought to shake this throne which the people had just upset, he would have applauded at the event, free afterwards to discover the most rapid way of muzzling the rabble, which was the name he generally gave to the working classes, but at the present moment his only anxiety consisted in discovering a means by which he could retain possession of his niece's fortune so as to be able to devour it with impunity.

When he heard Mathéus say he felt inclined to address him in the second person, he nevertheless made a movement of disgust.

"No joking," he said drily. "Come, what news have you?"

Mathéus maintained his insolent attitude.

"Eh! Eh!" he answered, with a sneer, "how sharply you speak to your brothers; for you are aware that we are all brothers! it's written on the flags. Oh! what a fine thing the Republic is!"

"Come to the point. What do you know? Where have you been?"

"I know that we shall perhaps be throwing up barricades one of these days, and I come from the Workers' Club, of which I am one of the most popular members. It is matter for regret, sir, that your opinions debar you from listening to me. I delivered a speech this morning against the Legitimists which was approved by everyone present. But for the matter of that, I can give you proof of my eloquence."

And Mathéus rising, stood upright, one hand on his heart and the other extended in front of him like a man about to speak.

M. de Cazalis understood that his worthy associate had some good news to tell him, and that he was making him pay for that news by amusing himself at his expense. He belonged to this man, and he saw he would be compelled to accept his sneers until it pleased him to say all. By cowardice and to flatter this rascal who played with him as with a prey, he lowered himself to the point of laughing at his clownish grimaces hoping by so doing to make him speak out sooner.

"You certainly must make a capital speaker," he said to him, with a smile.

Mathéus had kept in the same position, trying to recall the sentences of his speech. Then, he let himself fall into the armchair, crossed his legs, threw himself back and continued, still sneering:

"I can't remember it. It was very fine. I said the Legitimists were rascals. I even think I mentioned your name and suggested hanging you at the first opportunity. They applauded. I must, you understand, take care of my popularity."

He laughed, displaying his wolfish teeth.

M. de Cazalis, who was becoming exasperated at the scoundrel's familiarity, walked up and down the room making the greatest efforts not to burst out in anger. The other felt delicious delight at his rage, remained silent for a moment, and when he saw it would be imprudent to make fun any longer, he continued in a bantering tone:

"By the way, I forgot to tell you that M. Philippe Cayol is my colleague at the Workers' Club."

M. de Cazalis came to a standstill.

"At last!" he murmured.

"Yes," continued Mathéus slowly, "M. Philippe Cayol is a very warm Republican and I pride myself on being his disciple. I humbly confess to you that his speeches are of a much more fervent, democratic character than mine. That young man will certainly save the country if it ever stands in need of being saved."

"Ah! that simpleton has flung himself into the Liberal movement?"

"Body and soul. He is one of the leaders of the red party. The working-men worship him because he shows no pride with them and because he has the simplicity to tell them in good faith that the people are King and that the poor are going to take the place of the nobility and wealthy."

M. de Cazalis was beaming.

"He is compromising himself, we have him in our grip!" he exclaimed.

Mathéus feigned to be scandalized.

"What, he is compromising himself!" he answered. "Say he is a hero, a glorious child of the Republic! In ten years, the people, conquerors of kings, will erect altars to him. I experienced such enthusiasm at his speeches, that I suddenly felt the material of a Republican in me."

He rose, and with clownish majesty continued:

"Citizens, you see in me a Republican. Look at me, observe how a Republican is made. We are only a few hundred at Marseilles, but we are sufficient to bring about the salvation of humanity. As for myself I am full of zeal——"

In his turn he strode up and down the room.

"Here is what I have already accomplished in favour of the Republic," he continued. "I have taken M. Philippe Cayol as a model, and in order to inspire my mind with his thoughts, I have followed him step by step. We were both members of a secret society; then I arranged to be admitted to the Workers' Club at the same time as

he was. Each time he speaks there, I applaud him, intoxicate him with enthusiasm. That is my own poor way of serving the country. I am sure that M. Philippe Cayol, encouraged by me, will accomplish great things."

"I understand, I understand," murmured M. de Cazalis.

Mathéus continued declaiming.

"We will raise barricades, it is I who insist on it, because barricades are necessary to M. Philippe Cayol's glory. The people have laboured enough. Is it not so? The aristocrats must work in their turn. A few bullets will set everything in order. M. Philippe Cayol will march at the head of his friends, the working-men: he will lead them on to fortune, unless a gendarme takes him by the collar and drags him before the judges at the assizes, who will certainly show the bad taste to sentence him to transportation."

The ex-deputy was beside himself with delight. The grimaces with which Mathéus accompanied his speech, now amused him. He pressed his hands and repeated effusively:

"Thanks, thanks, I will reward you, you shall be rich."

For a moment Mathéus continued standing in his triumphant attitude. Then he burst out into a peal of laughter.

"Eh! What think you?" he exclaimed, "the trick's done?"

He had the manners of a mountebank about him, and was delighted at the scene with which he had accompanied the news he brought. At last master and valet seated themselves and talked in an undertone.

"You understand me," said the latter. "We have got M. Philippe, who is behaving like a child. Trust in me. I will make him do something extravagant which he'll pay dearly for."

"But if you follow him step by step, he must recognise you."

"Eh! no, he only saw me once, in the evening at Saint Barnabé. Besides, I have purchased a wig of a bright red colour, which gives me a capital revolutionary appearance. Ah! what simpletons these democrats are, my dear master! They talk of justice, duty, equality;

they have an air of honesty that irritates me. I bet they'd massacre me, if they were aware I was working for you. You will never recompense me sufficiently largely, for the sacrifice I am making in consenting to pass for one of theirs."

"And if the Liberal party wins the day?" asked M. de Cazalis, who had been thinking. Mathéus looked at his master stupefied.

"What do you say?" he answered, twitting him. "Then do you fancy they are so fond as all that of the Republic at Marseilles? Listen to this. What ever happens the Liberals will be beaten in this good city. Have no fear. If Cayol can be caught in some fray, his business will be settled. Before a fortnight's over our merchants will have had enough of liberty, and will want to strangle all those who serve it out to them."

The ex-deputy remembered the manœuvres that had brought about his election and could not repress a smile. His acolyte was right: where money is all-powerful, Republican ideas do not flourish.

"I have no need," continued Mathéus, "to expose my entire plan to you. Remain quiet and I feel sure of handing father and son over to you. We will begin the expedition to Saint Barnabé again, but in a more intelligent manner."

And as his master renewed his thanks he bluntly added :

"But look here, you must not have me collared with the other Republicans to get rid of me? I am compromising myself, and require a guarantee. Write me a letter instructing me to watch over Philippe Cayol. In that way you become my accomplice. I will return you that letter in exchange for a sum of money, which we will arrange between us, in payment for my services."

M. de Cazalis consented to everything. He could not for the matter of that do otherwise, and he felt he would always have power over Mathéus on account of the money.

The latter before leaving, urged him to remain quiet in his hotel as he wished to act alone.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REPUBLIC AT MARSEILLES.

THE Republic was at last solemnly proclaimed on the Cannebière, on the dull, wet morning of Tuesday, February 29th. At the very moment when the former authorities were divesting themselves of office, the temporary Commissary that Paris had sent to Marseilles, was descending the Rue d'Aix in a post-chaise. Thus, by a singular chance, during the march past of the troops and the National Guard, the representatives of overthrown Royalty and of the young Republic were brought face to face.

That day was a grand and solemn one for Philippe. His fondest hopes were realised. For a moment he had feared that the Monarchy might be followed by a Regency. The length of time that the Prefect and Mayor of Marseilles had taken to recognise the Revolution, had made him think that the struggle at Paris had perhaps not been decisive. They were gaining time, they were no doubt hoping for a reaction that was not forthcoming. When he heard the new government publicly proclaimed, it seemed to him that the people had just won a grand victory and he firmly believed that the hour of the great democratic cause had arrived.

But the hopes the young man had formed on hearing those big words, "liberty, equality, fraternity," pronounced, were not long in being dispelled by facts. He fell down from the heights of his humanitarian dreams to the reality of human passions and interests. This terrible fall exasperated him and drove him to extreme resolutions.

He had had the simplicity, to imagine that the proclamation of the Republic would be followed by a great movement, which would carry all the city along with it into a Liberal channel. He was painfully surprised when he perceived that the superior authorities, urged on, no doubt, by the fatality of circumstances, were obliged to make concessions to the reaction. The Conservatives, the Legitimists, themselves, remained in a measure the mas-

ters at Marseilles. Creatures of their own occupied official posts and secretly directed public affairs. In a word the city tolerated the new government rather than accepted it.

When the Republicans understood that they were not victorious, they wished at least to despatch representatives to Paris, who would be firmly resolved to defend the people's interests, and so the ensuing elections absorbed all their power of action. They felt how precious a victory would be to them, and ardently hoped that the deputies would be chosen from their ranks alone.

These elections were to be held on April 23. During the three weeks preceding that date, Philippe took an active part in the work and manœuvres of the different clubs. The democratic party had suffered a preliminary check on the occasion of the appointment of a Municipal Commission on which men hostile to the Republic had found seats, notwithstanding the desire openly expressed by the Republicans that they should be excluded. And so the clubs, in order not to be beaten a second time, displayed great activity and energy. They drew up preliminary lists, instructed the people in their political catechism and strained every nerve to make their cause triumph.

During these three feverish weeks, Philippe continued to throw dust into his own eyes. He forgot what was the real feeling in the city and would not see the formidable reaction that was surrounding the small group of Liberals. From morn to eve he ran about Marseilles, encouraging some, thanking others and endeavouring to obtain the largest number of votes possible. He undertook, moreover, to sound certain people whom the Republicans wished to make their representatives, and who by reason of their modesty, or from some other cause, remained in the background. Among these was M. Martelly.

One morning, Philippe went to his office where he was now very rarely seen, and sent to ask the ship-owner for a short interview. M. Martelly received him at once. He understood that it was not as one of his staff that the young man came to pay him a visit; he did not allude to his frequent absence, but treated him as a friend, guessing the nature of the errand that brought him to his presence.

After one or two commonplace sentences, Philippe entered frankly into his business.

"I have not seen you for some time at the Workers' Club," he said. "You are a member, are you not?"

"Yes," replied the ship-owner. "I go there very rarely, I think that such gatherings do but little to advance the affairs of liberalism."

Philippe feigned not to hear.

"Your absence is often regretted," he continued. "Men like you are precious. You were wrong, one of my colleagues said to me yesterday, to have kept in the background on the occasion of the appointment of the Municipal Commission, and now that the elections are drawing near you ought to show yourself and lend all the weight of your honourability to the cause we are defending."

M. Martely did not answer. He looked his interlocutor in the face, to compel him to make his proposals clear and precise.

Philippe understood him and conformed with good grace.

"We are quite disposed to push your candidature forward," he continued. "Why do you not place yourself in the ranks?"

There was a moment's silence during which the ship-owner look grave and sad.

"Why?" he answered slowly, "because I am certain beforehand to fail. Allow me to speak to you as a friend, as a father. You are going to your ruin, my son. The Republic will kill you, and you will kill the Republic. You know what my convictions are, you do not doubt, I hope, that I am ready to spend my blood for the triumph of what is right and true. But, really, we do not find ourselves here in a centre where self-sacrifice can be of use. We are vanquished before having fought. I thought for a moment of repairing to Paris, of offering my services to the government, of assisting it both personally and with my fortune. At Marseilles I have my hands tied. So I have decided to remain aside, for I will not mix in all the dirty business I foresee ahead."

"Then you are certain the reaction will win the day?"

"Yes. If all the cities in the provinces are animated

by the same ideas as Marseilles, our Republic will last two or three years at the most, and we shall then soon have a dictator. Interrogate facts and they will answer."

M. Martelly's grave tone of voice and calm despair produced a most lively impression on Philippe, who was for a moment conscious of the terrible reality.

"You are, perhaps, right," he answered sadly, "but if young people had your experience, they would cross their arms, and that would look cowardly. You see it is better to struggle. Then, you refuse to put yourself forward?"

"No, indeed. If the people think they have need of me, I will respond to their call, whatever happens. Although I feel certain of not succeeding, I do not think I have the right to avoid the requirements of circumstances. I will not retire in presence of a repulse, from the moment Republicans ask me to run the bad chance of that repulse, but I will not be mistaken for one of those ambitious creatures who are stirring up the population at present, who flatter the Republic as they flattered Royalty, so as to assure their fortune and position. I have kept in the dark up to now so as not to be confused with one of those men, and I wish it to be clearly understood that if I consent to be a candidate it is because people have asked me and I have solicited nothing."

M. Martelly had raised his voice. Standing up, his eyes sparkling, he accented each word with vigorous action. Philippe had also left his seat.

"Come, you are yourself again," he said, "you will see, all will go well. I am going to tell our friends at once that you accept their mandate. Your name will be placed on the preliminary lists to-day, and it must absolutely come victorious out of the urn."

"You are young," replied the ship-owner shaking his head; "you dream with your eyes open. Ah! my poor child, liberty is very sick. I think we are present at its funeral."

Philippe drew himself up violently.

"Well!" he exclaimed, "if they kill it, we'll take our guns and kill its murderers. It will be civil war, barricades, blood, corpses. So much the worse!"

He trembled with exasperation. M. Martelly had taken his hands and sought to pacify him.

"If you make barricades," he said to him, "I will go and place myself between your fire and that of the troops. Blood must not be spilt in the name of brotherhood. No, no; we must have no violence."

Philippe withdrew. This interview had filled him with sullen uneasiness. The ship-owner's calm reason had thrown cold water, as it were, on his passion. Internally he was in despair, but he continued to busy himself actively with the elections, and when the grand day came he had almost recovered hope, so that the result of the first trial fell upon him like a thunderbolt. All M. Martelly's predictions were accomplished. Not only was he not named, but the reactionary party had a complete victory. Out of ten deputies elected, there were barely three Radical republicans, the others belonged to the Conservative, and particularly to the Legitimist party.

From that moment Philippe was in a constant state of irritation. He saw clearly how useless his efforts were and yet he gave himself up to an ill-fated task that could only lead to misfortune. Each day the party he supported had to put up with a new defeat. The reaction increased in power, and one newspaper went so far as to openly preach political decentralisation to escape what it termed the Revolutionary dictatorship of Paris. The superior authorities were weak and powerless and constantly made concessions. If a king had landed on the Cannebière he would have been acclaimed by the entire city.

The Republicans protested in vain against the organization of the National Guard, the companies of which were composed solely of rich bourgeois, and consequently of Conservatives. This organization presented permanent danger of civil war. The day the people and the National Guard met there would necessarily be a shock.

Philippe, in his hours of anger and despair, foresaw this fatal meeting, and experienced ghastly delight in thinking of the hand-to-hand struggle. In the meanwhile he fraternized with the people, was at all the banquets and

intoxicated himself with rhetoric. After the elections he had resigned his post with M. Martelly, so as to be able to live freely in the streets, amidst the events of each day. He knew not how all this would end, but he nursed the vague hope of a battle out of which the people would issue victorious. Then the Republic would triumph and the working-men would command in their turn.

Two months passed by and they were in the middle of June.

Fine and Marius lived in constant alarm. The latter, not daring to lecture his brother any more, owing to his blunt manner, confined himself to watching him on the sly, so as to be always ready to save him from the follies he might be guilty of. One day as he arrived on the Cannebière, he found himself face to face with a captain of the National Guard, who was making the new gold braid on his uniform dazzle in the sun. After a moment he recognised Sauvaire.

The former master-stevedore was beaming. He struck his heel on the pavement in a victorious fashion. At times, when he glanced at his epaulettes out of the corner of his eye, a smile of satisfied vanity hovered round his lips. His sword troubled him somewhat by knocking against his calves; but he held it, leaning his hand on the hilt, with rounded arm. His uniform fitted him tightly in true military style, and if he were bursting in his tunic, he was happy to do so for the welfare of his country. By the way he walked, with his elbows stuck out, one could see he saved France at every ten paces. You could read on his intensely-delighted countenance, child-like joy at being dressed up as a soldier, and a burning desire to be taken seriously.

His meeting with Marius at first rather embarrassed him. He feared the latter might remember the past, the time when he frequented the gambling hells, and that he would make fun at finding him in uniform. He looked at him uneasily, dreading to see his dignity compromised. When he perceived the young man suppressed a slight smile, he thought it well to show himself off with all the grace of his rank of officer.

“Eh!” he exclaimed, in a military voice, brief and resounding. “Eh! it’s my young friend! How are you? It’s centuries since I saw you. Ah! How many events, good heavens! How many events!”

He spoke so loud that the passers-by turned round. This attention bestowed on his personality flattered him enormously. He shook himself in delight, producing a clanking sound of steel, and cast the reflex of his stripes and epaulettes in the eyes of the crowd.

As Marius pressed his hand without answering, he imagined he was confounded by the magnificence of his costume. He took his arm with a protecting air and began to walk up the Cannebière, deigning to give him proofs of friendship.

“Hey! you stare at me?” he continued. “You are surprised to see me in the National Guard? What could I do? They so begged me, so implored me, that in the end I accepted. You understand, I would a thousand times sooner live quietly at home. But in these difficult times good citizens have duties to perform. They had need of me and I could not refuse.”

He lied with the most bare-faced self-possession. It was he who had begged for the post of captain with joined hands. He wanted golden epaulettes: on that condition only did he consent to serve the country.

Marius sought for an answer and finding nothing, ended by murmuring:

“Yes, yes, we are in difficult times.”

“But we are here!” cried Sauvaire, placing his hand on his sword. “They will have to pass over our corpses before they can trouble the tranquillity of the land. Fear nothing, cheer-up your wives and children: the National Guard will not betray its mandate.”

He delivered this like a speech learnt by heart. Marius, to put him out of countenance, was tempted to ask him for news of Clairon.

“Observe all this population,” continued Sauvaire, “how peaceful, what faith it has in our vigilance and courage!”

He stopped, and continued in his old tone of naïveté and self-satisfaction:

“What do you think of my uniform? Haven’t I a martial air? The epaulettes, you know, cost me a tremendous lot of money.”

“You look capital,” answered Marius, “and I confess your unexpected appearance produced great impression on me. And what are your opinions?”

Sauvaire appeared full of importance.

“My opinions?” he repeated, thinking what that could mean. “Ah! yes, what I think of the Republic, that’s it, is it not? Well, I think the Republic is an excellent thing. Only, order, you understand. The National Guard was formed to preserve order. Order. I insist on that.”

He swung his body about, triumphant at having been able to find he had an opinion. At the bottom of his heart he felt esteem for the Republic, which had given him epaulettes; but he had been told that if the Republicans were victorious they would rob him of his money, and, therefore, he detested the Republicans. These contradictory sentiments had to get on together as best they could, but for the matter of that he never asked himself what his convictions were.

He went a little way further with Marius and then left him with the remark, uttered with much importance, that his duty called him elsewhere. But it was only a sham departure, he turned on his heels and came back to whisper to the young man in a confidential tone:

“Ah! I forgot. Just tell your brother that he compromises himself with that lot of tatterdemalions whom he drags along with him everywhere. Advise him to give up the rabble and obtain a captain’s commission like me. It’s more prudent.”

And, as Marius, without replying, pressed his hand to thank him, he added like the good fellow he was at heart:

“If I can be of use to you in any row, count on me. I feel just as much inclined to serve my friends as my country. I am at your service, you understand.”

He was no longer acting. Marius thanked him again and they parted the best friends in the world.

In the evening, the young man spoke to Fine and his brother of the meeting, and amused them by a descriptive account of the triumphant attitude of the former master-stevedore, but at last Philippe became irritated.

"And it's to such men as this that the tranquillity of the city is entrusted!" he exclaimed. "These gentlemen are well dressed, these gentlemen play at soldiers. Ah! let them beware! they may, perhaps, be compelled to perform their part seriously. The people are tired of their tomfoolery and vanity."

"Hold your tongue," said Marius, severely. "These men may be ridiculous, but one doesn't kill one's fellow countrymen."

Philippe rose and continued with greater violence:

"The country is not with them. It is the workmen, the workers who are the country. The bourgeois have guns, the people have none. The people are being guarded, musket to the shoulder, like wild beasts. Well! one of these days the beasts will show their teeth and devour their guardians. That's all."

And he abruptly went upstairs to his room.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT MATHÉUS UNDERSTOOD BY STRATEGY.

MATHÉUS was decidedly a pure Republican, a radical with whom there was no joking. His forehead was half covered by his carrot wig, and when he shook his head in the clubs, it resembled a torch throwing out a reddish light. He was always on the side of the extreme party, and supported any measure likely to cause disorder in the city. He had ended by inspiring a sort of respectful terror, and his advice was listened to with admiration, and fear. On the day following the elections he had spoken plainly of setting fire to Marseilles, and this had made him extremely popular among the exalted liberals.

He often met Philippe, but avoided becoming intimate with him, confining himself to keeping a watchful eye on

him from a distance and to taking note of the fiery language that sometimes escaped him. He wanted to see him mixed up in a nice little conspiracy. So long as the young man limited himself to declaiming in the clubs, taking part in the banquets and popular manifestations, he felt he could do nothing against him, and it was for that reason that he argued in favour of war and barricades. He hoped that at the first shot, Philippe would rush down and join in the street fight, and be arrested and condemned as an insurgent.

Besides, civil war formed part of Mathéus' calculations. Having promised his master to hand over to him father and son, he relied on the tumult of the insurrection to steal little Joseph, while Philippe would be either killed or imprisoned. He had arranged in his head a plan which, according to his idea, could not fail to succeed. But it was a question of persuading the people to fight. They seemed to him quite disposed to do so, and he had made up his mind that if ever a shot were fired, he would sow such discord that an encounter would be inevitable.

During this time M. de Cazalis was becoming impatient. For three months he had waited in vain for Mathéus to accomplish his promises. When the latter came secretly in the evening to give him an account of the events of the day, he complained bitterly of the long delay that obliged him to live in hiding at his mansion.

"But, sir," said the spy, with his insolent laugh, "I cannot make the barricades all alone! Allow the insurrection to ripen. Why, you're more of a Republican than myself. One accustoms oneself to everything, is it not so?"

One night Mathéus suddenly burst in upon the ex-deputy exclaiming:

"Faith, I believe we shall fight to-morrow. I have just spoken for two hours at the club."

He was in high spirits, and already saw in the near future the money his master had promised him if he succeeded. The latter pressed him with questions, insisting at length on facts.

"Look here," answered Mathéus. "The Marseillais would never, perhaps, have moved, but they have just had the

visit of some Parisians who were present at the events in February, and that has put some courage into them. You understand, I am speaking of those Parisians destined for the war in Italy, and who, robbed on the way by one of their chiefs, reached Marseilles stripped of everything.

"But those Parisians have gone," interrupted M. de Cazalis.

"Yes, but they have left a revolutionary current here. There was a gathering in their favour in front of the Prefecture which almost came to blows. The people wanted the city to come to their assistance and the working classes, who are very discontented, will make a great manifestation to-morrow which I trust will end badly."

"But what do the workmen want then?" inquired the ex-deputy.

Mathéus then posted him up in the actual state of affairs, which was very serious. The great danger came from the workmen employed at the National workshops, which had been established with much difficulty at Marseilles and were to cause irreparable misfortune. The only work that could be given to the people, by the terms of the decree of the Provisional Government, was the digging out of the canal, then in progress, which at the present day brings the waters of the Durance to the city. There was quite a multitude of workmen there, employed indiscriminately at a task other than their particular trades, who for the most part cursed the bread they earned and kept the spark of revolt always alight.

The discontent of these toilers arose from the inequality the government had established between them and their brethren at Paris. The latter, according to the decree, had only to work for ten hours, while those in the departments laboured for eleven hours. In presence of the incessant complaints of the Marseillais workmen the commissary, fearing the exasperation of this ill-disciplined body of men, had thought right to make use of his discretionary powers and had reduced the day's labour at Marseilles to ten hours.

Unfortunately all the heads of workshops would not accept this reduction. Some continued to insist on their workmen doing eleven hours; others deducted the value

of the hour's work that was not done. This gave rise to constant rebellion and a permanent feeling of exasperation which could only end in a violent crisis. Up to that time the complaints of the workmen had not met with any serious result; the statements of facts they had drawn up had had no effect; their manifestations had been met by idle promises which were broken as soon as their backs were turned. They wanted to finish the business, they wished for justice.

On Tuesday June 20th, the evening preceding that on which Mathéus had given these details to his master, the delegates of the corporations had assembled to discuss the advisability of making a grand manifestation. They had almost all voted against it, foreseeing, no doubt, the sanguinary struggle it would result in.

"The delegates seem to me clever and prudent persons," said Mathéus in conclusion; "but fortunately the workmen are far too irritated to listen to them. If there happen to be some cool heads among the latter, there are also many fiery spirits who dream of getting the upper hand by force. I think I can promise you a nice little insurrection. I know a great number of workmen will not abide by the vote of the delegates and have decided that the manifestation shall be held in spite of it. It will be extraordinary if some circumstance does not bring about a struggle. You shall see how I will warm it up for you."

M. de Cazalis listened to the spy with delight.

"Are your plans all formed?" he inquired. "You are certain Cayol will compromise himself and that you will succeed in gaining possession of the child?"

"Eh! don't be uneasy," answered the other. "That is my business. If there be a fight, Master Philippe will be in the first rank of the insurgents, of that you may be sure; and as to the child, he will be in your possession before evening. These workmen are perfect asses, they're going to get killed and imprisoned for nonsense. Ah! the Republic is a great joke! Good night, to-morrow morning I will call and give you the day's programme."

Mathéus left M. de Cazalis, and remained until night in the streets, listening to what was said and endeavouring

to foresee events. A rumour that was abroad caused him anxiety: it was pretended that the Government Commissary did not seem hostile to the manifestation. It was affirmed that he had received the visit of some delegates, who had hastened to inform him they were powerless to keep back the crowd of workmen, and he had let them understand that he was not displeased at this step, which might enable him to take more stringent measures against the refractory heads of the workshops. It was even added that he had already fixed the itinerary the column was to follow while he received the delegates.

Mathéus went to bed in despair and furious against the Republic.

"What a lot of cowards!" he murmured, "they will not dare exchange a shot! But fight, you brutes! You ruin me if you do not. They shake their fists at one another, the poor want to eat up the rich, and they always end by hugging each other. It's disgusting. You will see that to-morrow, the quarrel will end in a banquet, at which Commissary and workmen will get an indigestion from eating too much pork. However, we shall see."

As soon as he awoke, he hastened to the vicinity of the Prefecture. It was Thursday the 22nd. The building was surrounded by troops.

"And, on we go!" Mathéus murmured to himself with lively delight. "I knew they'd fight! I'll go and find my friends the workmen to throw them on those bayonets."

But before withdrawing, he mingled with the groups and found that the Commissary seemed to have repented of authorising the manifestation. A message had been sent to a few companies of the National Guard on the previous evening, and the line had been called out. No detail escaped the spy, and he remarked that no Republican company was present among the citizen soldiers. Sauvaire was parading at the corner of two streets.

Mathéus hastened to the Boulevard Chave, where another meeting of the delegates was to be held. They declared themselves opposed to the manifestation, as had occurred two days before, and a certain number of them even said that the workmen whom they represented, had that morning

gone to work as usual. As the men who were peacefully disposed were about to withdraw, those who wished for the manifestation at any price, urged on and excited by Mathéus, persuaded their comrades to join them. A nucleus was formed, which went on increasing and in the end became a regular crowd. The people were started and would now not stop.

When Mathéus understood that the multitude required no more urging-on, he allowed it to increase by itself and roll towards the Prefecture. During that time he completed his plan of campaign.

He wished first of all to give M. de Cazalis news, as he had promised. Nine o'clock was striking. Thinking aright that he would not be allowed to cross the Place Saint-Ferréol, which was then full of troops, he went to the Quay du Canal, took the Rue de Breteuil and found himself within a few steps of his master's mansion. He had to pass by the house inhabited by the Cayols, which stood on the Cours Bonaparte, close to the residence of M. de Cazalis. He cast a triumphant look at the structure as he went by.

His plan would depend on circumstances. He relied on the troubles of the insurrection to steal Joseph. No doubt Marius would go in search of his brother at the first shot; and during that time it would be easy for him to tear the child from Fine's arms. Besides, he was in hopes that as the Prefecture was near, all the quarter would take fire: perhaps, even, barricades might be raised in the neighbouring streets; in a word he awaited some event that would facilitate the capture of the little one, and he vowed to himself he would act boldly, and risk all to succeed.

As he took a last glance at the door, recalling to memory the inside of the house, which he had been studying for some time, he saw a young woman leave it rapidly, holding a child in her arms. He recognised Fine and little Joseph. This sudden exit alarmed him, and he proceeded to follow the young woman.

Fine walked along hurriedly, without turning her head, impatient to arrive at her destination. She went down

the Rue de Breteuil, up the Cannebière to the Place Royale and entered the narrow streets of the old town. Mathéus continued hurrying along behind her, wondering where she could be going to, and they thus reached the Place aux Œufs together. There, Fine suddenly disappeared in a house, and Mathéus remained for a few minutes in the centre of the square, perplexed, seeking to turn the precautions the Cayols were taking to his advantage.

Marius, who had been warned by his brother on the previous evening, of the troubles that might occur in the neighbourhood of the Prefecture, had decided not to leave Joseph in the house on the Cours Bonaparte. He had vague fears of a surprise; he felt that M. de Cazalis must be there, in the dark, watching for the first opportunity that occurred. When there is fighting in the streets, there are often burglaries in the houses.

Marius consequently thought it would not be prudent to keep the child in the room where they would certainly come to look for him in case an attempt were made to gain possession of him, and he arranged with Fine that they would hide him somewhere else, no later than the next morning. For that purpose they selected the little lodging the former flower-girl had long occupied on the Place aux Œufs and where her brother Cadet still resided. While Marius was running about the streets to watch over Philippe, his wife had just come to seek refuge with the child in a corner of Marseilles where she never thought she could be discovered. As she ascended the stairs she felt quite happy, saying to herself that she and the little one were saved.

Mathéus, after having taken two or three turns under the trees, approached a post of National Guards who were at a corner of the square. This post was occupied by men belonging to a Republican company and the spy saw at once with whom he had to deal.

"It seems there will be fighting opposite the Prefecture," he remarked to the lieutenant.

The latter feigned not to hear. After an instant Mathéus continued:

"This would be a splendid place for barricades! Just

look, one would almost think the ground had been specially prepared for them."

The lieutenant glanced complaisantly around him and ended by making up his mind to speak.

"Yes, yes," he said, "there would only be a few narrow lanes to block. The workmen are our brothers, we will not fight against them."

Mathéus, whom the lieutenant had mistaken for a navy, gave him a vigorous shake of the hand and hurried away. Chance had served him well: his plan of campaign was now complete. When he reached the mansion of M. de Cazalis he was panting for breath.

"All is going on well!" he exclaimed. "I'll be answerable for success!"

He then noticed that M. de Cazalis was wearing the uniform of a National Guard.

"What is the meaning of this masquerade?" he inquired in surprise. "I came to advise you not to show yourself,"

"I cannot keep still," answered the ex-deputy; "I'm too impatient, I must see for myself. Let us go down."

They went down and Mathéus related his morning's work to his master. As they approached the Prefecture, they heard a dull and terrible sound, the first roar of the riot.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIOT.

WHILST Mathéus had been following Fine and had called to inform M. de Cazalis of what he had done, the column of workmen was descending towards the Cannebière. This column, which had started from the railway station, then only comprised a few hundred workmen; but as it advanced, it recruited all whom it met on its road. Men and women, the floating population of the streets, were dragged along by this human torrent which poured down from the heights of Marseilles. When the manifestation issued from the Rue de Noailles, it extended to the bottom of the Cours like an immense flood. Thousands of

heads were there, swaying about like the waves of a human ocean.

A dull, confused sound, similar to the harsh voice of the sea, ran through the ranks of this multitude. Still, it was frightfully calm. It advanced gloomy and mute, without uttering a cry, without doing any damage. It fell upon, swarmed upon Marseilles, it seemed unconscious of its acts and appeared to obey natural laws of downfall and passion. An enormous rock hurled from the plain, would thus have rolled to the Port.

White and blue blouses predominated in the ranks. There were a few bright-coloured skirts of women, and from distance to distance, the black spots of coats: dark clothes worn by men whom the people seemed to obey. The crowd descended the Cannebière with a threatening murmur, passing between the rows of houses like a running stream full of multi-coloured reflex.

Philippe marched at the head amidst a lot of workmen, with his head thrown back and a harsh, resolute expression on his countenance. He wore a black frock coat which he had buttoned up closely, and which fitted him in at the waist like a military tunic. One felt he was ready for the struggle, that he awaited and desired it. His eye was clear, his lips were firmly set together and he uttered not a word. The pale, silent workmen by whom he was surrounded, glanced at him from time to time and seemed to be awaiting his orders.

As the column entered the Rue Saint Ferréol, there was a slight tumult; it halted for one or two minutes, then marched on again. The street, as far as the square where it ends, was empty, a few shopkeepers had put up their shutters; people were looking out from the windows; there was a deathlike silence, broken only by the deep sound of the tramp of the crowd.

In the middle of the empty street and at the corner of a narrow thoroughfare that crossed it, those who were in the first rank perceived a short, delicate-looking man awaiting the column. As soon as Philippe was near him, he recognised his brother. Marius without uttering a word, placed himself beside him and walked quietly amidst

the rioters. The two brothers exchanged a simple look. The people must have thought they were strangers to each other.

And the human flood continued to roll on thus to the Place Saint Ferréol.

There, at a few yards from the square, further advance was arrested by a cordon of troops. The crowd was without arms, and the soldiers' bayonets glittered in the sun. Murmurs of surprise and anger ran through the first ranks and rapidly spread from one end to the other of the column, the tail of which was still on the Cannebière. The workmen said in a low angry tone that they wanted to slaughter them, that they must be surrounded by troops and that the manifestation had only been authorized, in order that they might be massacred at ease.

While these murmurs were increasing, four delegates left the ranks and asked to be taken to the Commissary of the Government, as had been arranged the day before. They had hardly disappeared behind the line of soldiers when an irreparable event occurred attended by most sanguinary consequences.

When those at the tail of the column heard talk of troops under arms, bayonets and massacre, they apparently thought that those on ahead were being slaughtered, and began to push furiously forward.

Under the impulse of the irresistible movement of this mass of men, the group surrounding Philippe were compelled to advance a few steps. With their arms crossed over their breasts, to show they had no intention of making an attack, and that they were simply yielding to pressure from behind, the workmen arrived in this way before the soldiers. An officer seeing them approach lost his head and abruptly gave the command to lower bayonets. And the bright sharp weapons came down and faced the people.

A desperate attempt was made to retire. Philippe and those around him threw themselves backward endeavouring to stem the enormous, crushing crowd that were pushing them on to death. But this living wall could not be resisted. It advanced solid as a wall of stone. The workmen forcibly, fatally, reached the points of the bayonets which

the soldiers held ready for them. They saw these points at their breasts and felt them enter, little by little, into their flesh.

It is related that while the general commanding made a despairing gesture and ordered the bayonets to be raised a clear voice was heard to shout from the Place Saint Ferréol: "Stick those ruffians! Stick them!" And, from the windows of a neighbouring aristocratic club, well dressed gentlemen applauded at the sight of the people's blood flowing, as if they had been in a box at a theatre and were amused at the by-play of an actor.

The workmen, at the first bayonet wounds, uttered cries of rage and terror. This crowd which had hitherto been silent, became mad at being attacked without any legal warning. It had only its fists to protect it against the muskets by which it was threatened.

Philippe was not wounded thanks to Marius, who held him back at the moment when he was committing the folly of throwing himself forward with clenched fists. A few workmen around him were slightly hurt. One only had his arm run through.

At the general's word of command, the soldiers had raised their bayonets and retired step by step, but the crowd had suddenly stopped on realizing the fact that it was without arms. A shudder ran through the column from one end to the other. All at once it disbanded, rushing into the cross streets with the cry: "Vengeance! Vengeance! They are murdering our brothers!"

For an instant there was a terrible noise; then the clamour died away: the workmen went off in search of arms, calling for assistance, spreading terror and anger in each street and always uttering the painful and formidable cry: "They are murdering our brothers! Vengeance! Vengeance!"

At that moment M. de Cazalis and Mathéus were descending the Cours Bonaparte. The sullen rumble that they heard was the rush of the mob. Mathéus understood that here was a rupture and joyfully rubbed his hands. To ascertain the truth he stopped a peaceful bourgeois who was flying in terror, impatient to shut himself up at home.

"Oh! sir," he stammered out in answer to the inquiry, "they are killing one another over there. The soldiers have charged the people, and the people will set fire to the city, that's sure."

And he fled, fancying he saw the flames behind him.

"Well! What did I tell you?" said Mathéus to M. de Cazalis, "I knew very well we should be able to take advantage of circumstances. Here we are in the midst of a revolution. We must attend to our little business."

"What are you going to do?" asked the ex-deputy in an undertone.

"Oh! what I am going to do is very simple. Now the people are mad, I can lead them along as I like. It will suffice if they fight at the place I shall take them to."

And as M. de Cazalis did not understand but gave him an inquiring look, the spy added:

"Trust to me. I have not time to explain all to you. A final word: I advise you to take advantage of your disguise to mix with a company of National Guards. If you see a barricade anywhere, march with the troops that attack it."

"Why?"

"Didn't you tell me you were impatient and curious? Then do what I tell you: you will be in the first row."

Mathéus chuckled and looking his master straight in the face, continued:

"You understand, you might find Philippe at the end of the barrel of your musket. Don't go and miss him; and no bad joke, don't fire at me so as to free yourself of my personality. That's understood. When the barricade is taken I'll show you how I work."

Mathéus hurried rapidly away. He was impatient to go and embroil matters. As he followed the Rue Grignan to enter the Rue Saint Ferréol and mix with the retiring workmen, he saw two men talking together on the pavement, and recognised Marius and Philippe.

"Wait, wait," he murmured as he ran along, "I think I shall be able to make you come and fight with us."

Marius was beseeching Philippe not to compromise himself any further. He reminded him of his son, of the

happiness of all of them, and as his brother showed signs of impatience he exclaimed :

"Well! So let it be! let us not speak of ourselves. But do you not see that the insurrection which is about to break out cannot succeed? The desire of a good patriot should be to avoid the effusion of blood, when fighting is contrary to the interests of all. I think I serve the country better than you, by preaching peace."

"They have tried to murder our brothers," answered Philippe, in a sullen voice, "we must have vengeance. We did not commence. Look here, shall I tell you? We don't want any more of this bourgeois Republic; we want a Republic of our own, a Republic of the people. Don't answer, it's useless. If the people fight, I shall fight."

"But, unfortunate being that you are! you are ruining yourself and your friends themselves by encouraging them with your presence, by leading them to certain imprisonment. Remember what M. Martelly told you."

Marius, for more than a quarter of an hour, endeavoured to influence his brother with arguments such as these, but the latter stood there with cloudy brow and sparkling eyes, and hardly listened to him. All at once Philippe seized his arm and compelled him to be silent. The sharp crack of musketry was heard at the bottom of the Rue Saint Ferréol.

"Do you hear?" he exclaimed, excitedly, "they're firing on unarmed men who ask for justice! And you wish me to stand by quietly, while that is going on, you want me to be a coward!"

He went a few steps; then, turning round, continued more softly.

"If I'm killed you'll watch over Joseph. Adieu!"

Marius hastened to join him.

"I'll go with you," he said quietly.

The two young men descended the Rue Saint Ferréol in all haste. On reaching the Rue Vacon, they heard the firing on their right and proceeded rapidly to the Rue de Rome. There, they were in the midst of the battle.

Mathéus, on mixing with the workmen had begun to shout for vengeance louder than the others, and thus

gathered a group of the most hot-headed round him. This party descended the Rue Saint Ferréol singing the *Marseillaise*, and ended by stopping at the corner of the Rue Pizançon, to listen to Mathéus, who demanded silence with a motion of the hand.

"My friends," he said, "it's stupid to sing, we must act. If we run about the streets in this way we shall meet with soldiers who will either kill us or make us prisoners."

The crowd uttered a cry of rage.

"Let us avenge our brothers," resumed Mathéus. "Blood calls for blood."

"Yes, yes!" howled the workmen. "To the barricades! to the barricades!"

At that moment Mathéus glanced towards the upper part of the street and perceived a company of National Guards advancing with a heavy tread.

"You see, brothers," he exclaimed, "they are sending these men to massacre us. We will defend ourselves to the last!"

The people were intoxicated, they shook their fists at the National Guards and looked for stones to throw at them.

"No, not here, we could not hold out for five minutes," said Mathéus. "Come!"

The workmen followed him. They wanted a chief and they chose this man because he spoke of massacre. They ran to the Rue de Rome. Just then three large empty carts were passing along the street. The spy sprang to the head of the first horse, and notwithstanding the carter's cries ordered his men to unharness it. Then, when that was done, he said to the driver:

"Take away your horses. The people want the carts. They'll pay you if they conquer."

Turning towards the crowd he pointed to the Rue de la Palud which faced them and added:

"Quick, shove these carts along and turn them over on the side, across this street. Search in the adjoining shops and see if you can't find something to add to the barricade."

In five minutes the obstruction was raised. It was only composed of three carts and a few empty barrels

which had been found in a neighbouring cellar. It was foolish to think seriously of defending themselves there. But the rioters were mad with irritation, they did not even trouble to reflect that they had no arms, and were about to be riddled with bullets without being able to respond.

Mathéus silently enjoyed the fun. At the bottom of his heart he was not sorry to get some of his good friends, the workmen, killed, for they had been wearying him profoundly during the past four months with their humanitarian speeches. Besides, there must be at least one corpse in order for his plans to be successful, and for that reason he had taken care that the barricade should be full of holes so that the bullets might pass through it.

A deathlike silence reigned around. The workmen, lying flat on the ground, waited. All of a sudden, they heard the heavy, measured tread of a company advancing in the Rue de Rome. Then only did they remember that they had no arms. Furiously they, commenced tearing the stones out of the road: flat, sharp stones that would play terrible havoc.

The heavy, measured tread became more and more distinct. At last, the company which the workmen had already seen behind them, appeared at the corner of the Rue de Rome. Captain Sauvaire who was marching at the head, stopped anxiously before the barricade. At the same moment a shower of stones fell on the National Guards. Men were wounded and the captain's shako was smashed in with a large flint.

The company retreated a few steps at this sudden attack. Stones continued to arrive falling one by one into the body of men with dull thuds. Then a police commissary left the ranks and read aloud the three legal summonses to disperse, amidst profound silence. The rioters, who had expended all their store of stones were again lying down tearing up the road and preparing for the struggle, without even listening to the summonses.

As they rose, the police commissary withdrew, the muzzles of the muskets were lowered and a shower of bullets passed over the barricade. They had only just

time to stoop down, to hide in the recesses of the doorways, anywhere, in fact, where they could find shelter. None of them were wounded. Their rage was such that they did not think of flight; they continued throwing stones, hiding themselves as best they could. The badly-aimed shots passed over their heads or were lost at the base of the barricade.

Mathéus had prudently found shelter behind a huge cask. From there he encouraged his men, furious at the clumsiness of the National Guards and endeavouring to place the workmen in the line of fire.

He murmured between his teeth:

"You'll see that not one of those wretches will get killed!"

He was not without feeling a certain terror. He knew better than anyone that the barricade would be captured as soon as the National Guards chose, and he disliked falling into their hands, as that would have put a sudden stop to the exploits he meditated. He wanted a corpse, nothing more: after that he would fly as fast as his legs could carry him. The misfortune was that none of the rioters seemed disposed to get killed.

For five long minutes he remained behind his cask, sweating with fear and anxiety. The firing continued, causing splinters of wood to fly about and riddling the carts with bullets. The workmen did not dare leave their hiding place. At last one of them decided to risk his presence in the middle of the street to gather a new lot of stones. He slid along behind the barricade, taking advantage of every bit of shelter.

Mathéus followed his movements with glittering eyes. He felt this man would be the victim he so much desired.

"Here's my man," he thought. "If he passes in front of that gap, which I took care to leave open, he will be shot down."

He had noticed that during the last few moments, bullets had been pouring through the aperture in question. As the workman had quietly set about tearing up paving stones, he beckoned him with energetic gestures to approach. The man, without the least distrust, thinking the chief

had something important to tell him, began crawling along slowly behind the barricade. The time came when he found himself opposite the breach. Eight or ten bullets entered his body and laid him low. He struggled atrociously, then remained quiet, with his face towards the earth.

Then, Mathéus uttered a terrible cry, and all the rioters dashed into the middle of the street howling with exasperation. The National Guards ceased firing, thinking that those who were at the barricade yielded. The spy took advantage of that circumstance to carry off the corpse. He called for assistance, placed the dead body on the workmen's shoulders and crying aloud for vengeance, put himself at their head.

"To arms! let the people know that the Guard fires upon unarmed men. To arms! to arms! They are murdering our brothers!"

And in a low undertone he said to himself:

"I have my corpse, the people will fight."

The party he was leading fled by the Rue de la Palud, and their retreat was marked by their cries, as they bore away the body of their dead brother like a standard of horror and revolt.

It was at that moment that Marius and Philippe arrived at the scene of the encounter. They found the company of National Guards stationed in the middle of the Rue de Rome among the remains of the three carts, looking very much embarrassed at their victory; for they had imagined they had to deal with at least a hundred men, and were quite confused on ascertaining that for nearly a quarter of an hour, they had been keeping up a brisk fire against only about a dozen poor wretches. They felt the horrible and sanguinary absurdity of their mistake.

Captain Sauvaire was exasperated. At the bottom of his heart, what irritated him the most, was the terrible blow his shako had received at the commencement of the action. He considered himself attained in the dignity of his uniform, and feared that all the prestige of his beautiful costume was escaping by the hole made by the revolutionary stone of an insurgent.

Marius, on recognising him, hastened up to him, to

obtain some information as to what had occurred. But the ex-master stevedore did not give him time to question him.

"What do you think of those blackguards," he shouted, "who attack us with stones? The jackasses have not even guns. Hold on! Look here!"

And he held out his shako, on which the gilded metal ornament was broken.

"A bullet would only have made a small hole," he resumed. "Now I shall be obliged to purchase a new shako. These things are very expensive."

"Could you tell me—?" began Marius.

But Sauvaire would not allow him to finish his sentence. He took him aside, placed his damaged shako on his head, and said:

"Speak frankly. Doesn't this perforated headgear spoil the look of me? Ah! Brutes of Republicans! I'll make them pay dearly for their stone!"

Marius profited by his anger to at last ask a question: "But what has occurred?"

"Eh! we've killed one. So much the better! They were there behind those carts, two or three hundred, perhaps a thousand. We got the better of them after an hour's furious fighting. You see that pool of blood in the street. For sure one of them must be dead. That will teach them to throw stones at the National Guard. Order! Order before everything!"

Marius was about to leave him when he caught him by the button-hole of his coat.

"In reality," he added, in a voice weak with feeling; "I am sorry of the death of this poor fellow. It was perhaps not he who threw the stone. Oh! if I were certain it were he! Just now, when I saw blood on the ground, I felt a peculiar feeling. After all, order——"

The young man left him talking and joined his brother who was standing a few paces off. He felt extremely sad at what he had just heard. This blood would fall upon the heads of those who had spilt it.

"Well?" asked Philippe.

Marius did not answer at once. He could not hide

what had happened from his brother, and he hesitated to tell him of it, expecting a terrible outburst of passion. They took a few steps in silence.

"You don't answer," said Philippe in a gloomy manner. "Behind those carts, there were corpses, is it not so?"

"No," murmured Marius, making up his mind to tell the truth. "Only one workman was killed."

"Eh! what matters the number?" violently interrupted the Republican. "My duty is now traced out for me. The struggle is inevitable. You'll not ask me to remain quietly at home any more. That would be cowardly. I have hesitated too long, I'm going to join those I swore to defend, if ever they were attacked."

The two brothers while talking, had reached the Cours Saint Louis. Their further progress was barred by an immense crowd. There the riot was fermenting.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH MATHÉUS COMPLETES HIS WORK.

THE delegates who had succeeded in reaching the Commissary of the government, had only been able to obtain a letter from him in which he supported the men's desire to work only ten hours a day. But this letter came too late. The delegates might well show it to the parties they met, but the word "vengeance" was now on every tongue and the people declared that blood called for blood.

Besides, as generally happens, the causes of the struggle that was in preparation escaped the majority. The greater part of the population were ignorant of the object of the riot; there was rage and terror in the air, that was all. While the beating to arms sounded lugubriously in the streets, and the National Guards hastened to their posts, people questioned one another not knowing who was the enemy against whom they were arming.

A company composed of stevedores, having heard it stated that this enemy was the people, refused to march; notwithstanding the hopes that had, perhaps, been enter-

tained in Conservative quarters, these workmen would not fire on workmen.

The people were in revolt, that was the only certainty that spread among the crowd. Why were they in revolt? What did they want? No one could answer. The workmen themselves were no longer acting on the motives that had brought them to the Prefecture; they were now solely led on by anger. The struggle had become personal without any hidden thought of political insurrection. If some interested leaders had not urged the people on to violence, it is very likely all would have ended in shouts and threats.

The Place Royale, which since February had been named the Place de la Révolution, became the centre of the movement. Some Republican companies had made it their headquarters. As soon as the news of the fight which had just taken place at the barricade in the Rue de la Palud, had spread among the groups assembled on the Cours and Cannebière, the workmen advanced in a crowd towards these companies and inquired whether they also were going to march against them. The gathering was soon considerable: the events of the morning were related with furious exclamations and the names given of those who had been killed or wounded by the troops and National Guard. These accounts excited those who heard them and the tumult continued to increase. But the crowd did not move, confining itself to shouting and calling for vengeance. It required another shock to throw it into open revolt.

At this moment, the General commanding the National Guard made a supreme effort. He went into the midst of the people endeavouring to pacify their minds by gentle words.

This General was not popular. He was taxed rightly or wrongly with being hostile to the Republic. He had unfortunately gathered around him a staff chosen in the ranks of the reaction. To the crowd he was unknown, and the people, blind with anger, made him responsible for the deplorable events that were occurring. No one had noticed his gesture of despair in the Rue Saint Ferréol

when the soldiers had crossed bayonets without his order. As soon as he made his appearance, he was surrounded by exasperated men who reviled him and accused him of all the misfortunes of the morning. He remained calm, did not seek to defend himself, confining his remarks to promising the people all possible satisfaction and beseeching them not to bring about still greater trouble. But it was necessary for the Republican companies to come to his assistance. He withdrew pronouncing words of peace in a loud, firm voice. After his departure the tumult, instead of subsiding, increased.

Then an officer of police appeared and summoned the crowd to withdraw. At the same time the companies received orders to go and post themselves on the Cannebière; one of them closed the street in its entire breadth, another drew up on the left hand pavement. But this movement did not have the effect of displacing the centre of the gathering. The Cours Saint Louis and the Cannebière were invaded. At every instant the lines of the National Guards were broken and swarms of people passed through them. The crowd became a crush and the clamour more violent. The least thing would have caused an explosion.

All at once a hubbub burst forth on the Cours Saint Louis. The procession in which the body of the workman killed in the Rue de la Palud, was being carried, and at the head of which marched Mathéus, had just left the Rue d'Aubagne. Mathéus had torn his clothes to make believe in a hand-to-hand struggle, and had placed himself in the first rank howling, black with dust and furiously shaking his red wig. Four men followed him bearing the body, the arms and legs of which were dangling down and swinging about in a horrible way. The head which was thrown back, displayed a horrible wound that had carried away half the cheek. Then came the little party who had defended the barricade, with their eyes darting out of their heads and beside themselves with the mad race Mathéus had made them take in the streets of the city. And all shouted: "Vengeance! Vengeance!" in a hoarse, heart-rending voice.

The effect produced by this procession was overwhelming.

Mathéus, guessing the Cours and Cannebière would be full of people, had arranged so as to produce a final dramatic stroke. It was for that reason he had led his followers through all the narrow streets, before bringing them suddenly into the midst of the crowd. He wanted to give the gathering time to form and he sought above all, to fatigue his men, to deprive them of sound judgment, to turn them into furious maniacs, whom he would then cast to the four corners of the city to bring out the entire population.

As soon as the procession had left the Rue d'Aubagne, the crowd opened violently before him, with cries of rage and horror. There was a crush which threw the on-lookers against the houses, and the funeral procession, amidst the fury and terror it excited on every side, went straight ahead, piercing the crowd, tracing a broad road, which closed behind it amidst frightful tumult.

On reaching the upper end of the Cannebière the procession broke the line of National Guards who were barring the street, and passed through the crowd assembled on the pavement, to the Place de la République. The effect produced on this second gathering was terrible in the extreme.

These few bleeding men seemed to cast burning embers around them as they marched along.

Mathéus allowed the procession to be lost in the old town and ran rapidly uphill towards the Cours Saint Louis. As he crossed it, he perceived in a café which was then undergoing repairs, some National Guards who had taken refuge there in order to save themselves from being torn to pieces by the mob. He returned, so as to put in action a plan that the sight of the National Guards had instilled into him. His sole anxiety consisted in seeing the workmen without arms, because the struggle would only be serious from the moment the people had guns. If a few shots were not immediately exchanged, the crowd might be dompted and muzzled. It was the want of arms that alone delayed the insurrection.

So soon as he reached the Cours Saint Louis again, he mixed with the groups of people who were still excited

at the view of the funeral procession, and he drew attention to the café where the municipal troops were.

"They are Carlists," he exclaimed. "Down with the National Guard!"

That cry found a responding echo in the crowd. Everyone turned towards the café, every mouth began to revile and threaten those who had taken refuge there.

"I know them," shouted Mathéus, "they belong to the company who fired on us in the Rue de la Palud."

This statement was false, but who could deny it amidst such confusion. The cries became louder, and the most daring began to pick up stones and to cast them at the windows where they saw the National Guards. The latter were guilty of the imprudence of pointing their muskets at the people. Then the crowd lost their heads and rushed toward the café. Mathéus was ahead and shouted:

"We want muskets. Let us disarm them!"

Philippe and Marius had been standing for a quarter of an hour at the entrance to the Rue de Rome. Being unable to advance to the first ranks, they had confined themselves to following the mob in a most excited frame of mind, and had seen the lugubrious procession go by with the dead workman.

"Look!" Philippe exclaimed, simply pressing his brother's arm vigorously.

And he resumed savage silence. Then, when the National Guards pointed their muskets at the people, he dashed forward, without uttering a word and rushed with the mob to the assault of the café.

He and Marius, who had followed him step by step, entered the café almost at the same time as Mathéus. The rooms above were invaded in a few seconds, the National Guards being prudent enough not to offer any serious resistance and allowing themselves to be disarmed by the first who entered.

Philippe seized two muskets and presented one to his brother.

"No," said the latter. "I don't fight with Frenchmen."

Philippe gave a gesture of impatience and hurried off to the Cours, without even looking to see if Marius was

following him. The latter, none the less, went after him, unable to make up his mind to leave him, and still hoping to save him from the scrimmage.

The excitement was intense on the Cours and Cannebière. The few rioters who had succeeded in procuring muskets by disarming the National Guard, ran and mixed with the Republican companies massed on the pavement. Philippe stopped before the Hotel des Empereurs, at one or two paces from Mathéus.

It was just at that moment that the General made another attempt at conciliation. He showed himself again in the crowd preaching concord. By a fatal error the people continued to regard him as the only person guilty of the accidents in the morning. As he was passing before the Hôtel des Empereurs, some men sprang at the bridle of his horse and a crowd formed round him insulting and threatening him, while a few National Guards tried in vain to release him.

In the meanwhile, Mathéus looked to see if his gun was loaded. His eyes shone, and an ugly smile distorted his features. A new idea had just occurred to him to hurry on events. Hiding behind the crowd, he aimed at the General who was opposite him. The gun went off and there was then a tremendous outcry. The General quietly wiped away with his hand, the few drops of blood the bullet had drawn from him in grazing his cheek.

Mathéus' shot was followed by several others, which completed the panic. The simple on-lookers rushed away in disorder, quite terrified, and expecting to be riddled with bullets in their flight. The rioters moved off with the cry:

“To the barricades! to the barricades!”

It looked as if an angry breeze were sweeping the crowd away. The lines of National Guards were broken, and the companies dispersed by the torrent bearing them along. In less than two minutes, the Cannebière and Cours were deserted.

The General had withdrawn looking pale and sad. Mathéus had disappeared as if by enchantment. Philippe full of indignation, had dashed in vain to the spot where

a streak of smoke revealed the assassin's presence; but he was only able to distinguish an indistinct form stooping down and fleeing.

When the little square was empty, and as the drums broke the frightful silence of the streets, Marius dragged his brother towards the Place aux Œufs, where their happiness was hidden. As they entered the Grande Rue, they perceived parties of workmen occupying the square and raising barricades. Marius stifled a cry of anguish.

It was then about noon.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BARRICADES AT THE PLACE AUX ŒUFS.

WHILE the crowd were flying and dispersing in terror, Philippe and Marius had remained, for a few instants, near the Hôtel des Empereurs, sheltered in the recess of a doorway, so as not to be dragged along by the rush of the multitude.

Philippe felt all his sentiments of loyalty revolting within him, at the cowardly attempt that had been made on the General's life, and his brother, who could read this indignation on his countenance, took advantage of the opportunity to make a final effort to persuade him to throw off his connection with civil war.

As soon as they were alone Marius said:

"Well! do you mean to continue making common cause with these assassins?"

"There are scoundrels in all parties," Philippe answered sullenly.

"I know it, but an insurrection is fatally doomed when it commences under such auspices. Come with me, I beseech you, do not compromise yourself any further."

The two brothers had begun slowly ascending towards the Cours. Marius taking Philippe that way, so as to bring him to the room where he had hidden his child; he said to himself, that once there, he would retain him and save him in spite of himself.

"Fine and Joseph have found refuge near here," he said, as they walked along, "I advised my wife to pass the day with your son in the little lodging on the Place aux Œufs, so as to be beyond reach of a surprise, which could easily be accomplished during the troubles of this day. Come along, we'll only remain a few minutes if you like."

Philippe followed his brother without answering. He recalled M. Martelly's severe language; the shot that had wounded the General still resounded in his ears, he stiffened his neck, he would not abandon the people's cause, and yet, in spite of himself, he began to hear the grave voice of reason, which whispered to him not to mix in a useless and sanguinary outbreak. Besides, he ignored what was passing; all, perhaps, was over; the workmen might be raising barricades in distant streets, and these would be captured before they had time to defend them. He walked beside his brother with an uneasy mind, half conquered and not knowing what to do.

It was then that the two brothers, on entering the Grande Rue, perceived a crowd of workmen on the Place aux Œufs, who were hastily throwing-up barricades.

Marius stopped in despair. He reflected that Fine and Joseph would find themselves in the centre of the riot and he said to himself, that Philippe would now certainly fight. What worried him more than anything else, was that he accused himself of being the author of all this misfortune. Was it not he who had advised his wife to take refuge there? Was it not he who had just led his brother into the middle of the riot?

Philippe had also stopped, and called his brother's attention to the scene before them.

"Look," he exclaimed, "chance has spared me from the shame of acting as a coward, by leading me to those whom I had sworn to defend and whom I was, perhaps, about to abandon. I will fight for liberty, and watch over my son."

He climbed over the first obstructions that had been thrown across the street, and found himself in the midst of workmen who shook him warmly by the hand. Marius

followed, and ran rapidly upstairs to the room where Fine and Joseph were.

Mathéus had completely succeeded. He had attained his end, step by step, assisted by circumstances, and advancing slowly and surely towards his object. It was he who had in a measure produced the events, urging on the people to insurrection, and bringing them to fight at the very spot where he desired the riot to break out.

After having discharged his musket at the General, he ascended in double quick time towards the Cours, leading parties of workmen with him, whilst the terrified crowd were trampling each other under foot. As he ran, he uttered this rallying cry:

“To the Place aux Œufs! To the Place aux Œufs!”

So soon as he had succeeded in getting about a dozen rioters to follow him, he shouted louder than ever, and rapidly had a crowd at his heels. This flood of armed men, passing through the gathering, indicated a direction to the insurrectionary movement which until then had been hesitating. The workmen, not knowing where to entrench themselves, would perhaps have dispersed; but seeing some of their comrades running towards a place they indicated, they wished to follow them, and all who were spurred on to the struggle by thoughts of vengeance, flew into the Grande Rue. The Place aux Œufs was soon full.

Mathéus on reaching the square, pointed out the beautiful spot he had chosen to the workmen about him.

“Look,” he said to them. “The place seems to have been made for fighting.”

That remark ran through the crowd. The revolt was destined to break out in the centre of the old town, amidst those narrow streets that could be easily barricaded. Every one felt that the insurrection was at home there, and they thought only of the struggle. A breath of irritation sped through this fiery-headed mob.

The workmen, however, did not dare act. The post of National Guards which Mathéus had noticed in the morning was still in a corner of the square.

“Stop,” said Mathéus to the most enthusiastic, “I’ll undertake to disperse them. They are friends.”

He went up to the lieutenant with whom he had previously exchanged a few words, and asked him if his men were for the people. The lieutenant answered that they were there to preserve order.

"So are we," Mathéus answered, shamelessly.

Then he approached him, and added in a lower tone:

"Listen, I have a bit of advice to give you. You go off as quickly as you can. If you refuse, we shall be obliged to disarm you, perhaps kill you, and brothers, you know, don't kill each other. Trust in me, don't remain a minute longer."

The lieutenant glanced round him. He felt only too glad to go away, but he was afraid of appearing a coward. The position was critical. The rioters slowly surrounded the National Guard and gazed at their muskets with eyes burning with desire. Other men were working at the barricade, and the lieutenant could not quietly look on without making an effort to stop them. He preferred to withdraw; and the National Guards marched off amidst profound silence.

From that moment the square was in possession of the rioters, who began fortifying themselves there as well as they could. Their misfortune was that they had not the necessary materials for throwing up a lofty and solid barricade. They had to be satisfied with the benches and packing cases of the dealers in herbs established there. These they first of all placed across the street, and they then searched the adjoining houses for barrels, planks and any other kind of suitable material.

In the meanwhile, Mathéus was resting on his victory. Now that he had attained his end, he wished to make himself as small as possible, and disappeared in the crowd, so as not to compromise himself further. He had washed his face at a neighbouring fountain, and had left his musket standing against a wall. He lolled about among the crowd, with his hands in his pockets, like a good bourgeois; he presented such a tranquil appearance, that the workmen who had seen him performing the comedy of anger, did not recognise him. He ended by ascending the steps of a house from which he attentively followed

the scene that was passing on the square, and searched with his eyes for Philippe and Marius.

"You will fall into the trap, my little beauties," he thought, with a calm smile. "My snares are well set. Ah! you wanted to place the child in safety. Eh! simpletons that you are, you have thrown him into my arms! You will rush to protect the little darling, and be caught with him!"

He kept on looking, without showing the least impatience. He knew those whom he was awaiting could not fail to come. When the two brothers emerged from the Grande Rue, he merely shrugged his shoulders and murmured:

"I was sure of it."

Then, he never lost sight of them. He followed them in the crowd, and saw Marius run up to find Fine, whilst Philippe mixed with the rioters.

"Come, that's perfect," he murmured again. "I shall, perhaps, be obliged to kill the little young man. As to the great booby, his business is settled, if the National Guards don't send him to rot in the ground, we'll see that the assizes send him to rot in prison."

He descended and went and turned round Philippe out of curiosity. The hour for him to act had not arrived. He thought himself at a play, his instincts were gently tickled at the hope of being present at a massacre. While waiting to accomplish the abduction he had undertaken, he resolved to amuse himself by seeing people kill each other.

The rioters in the meanwhile, had returned to the barricades. Little by little, they had piled up a fairly large quantity of material on the square, comprising a pell mell of all sorts of objects which they distributed as well as possible among the six barricades in course of erection. They formed a chain, passing planks, paving stones, everything they came across, from hand to hand, each ran about on his own account, and returning, threw what he had found on the heap. It was a feverish coming and going, a sort of immense workshop of revolt, where every labourer hurried along zealously yet gloomily at the task, with a threat on his lips and vengeance in his heart.

Whilst the majority brought materials, others, no doubt wheel-wrights and carpenters, had undertaken to strengthen the barricades. Having neither nails nor hammers, they confined themselves to dovetailing the objects one with the other.

The two principle barricades were thrown up at the entrance to the Grande Rue, on the side of the Cours, and at the entrance to the Rue Requis Novis. These, notwithstanding the efforts of the rioters, were nothing, in reality, but a mass of objects offering but little resistance and forming in no way a serious obstruction. Four barricades of still less importance, were raised across the Rues de la Vieille Cuiraterie, Lune-Blanche, Vieille-Monnaie and Lune-d'Or. One street only remained open, the Rue des Marquises, which was necessary to the rioters for communication with the Rue Belzunce, the Place des Precheurs, and all the narrow crooked lanes of the old quarter, where they intended to fly and lose themselves in case of defeat. The Place aux Œufs, thus fortified, would have been an impregnable stronghold if the barricades had been stronger.

As soon as Philippe found himself amidst the Republicans, he had put his hand to work without hesitation. He had laboured like the others, carrying all that he could find to the scene of action. He forgot Marius' sober words and thought no more of his child, all his passion was bursting within him, and urging him forward.

As he was dragging a barrel along, he all at once heard an ironical voice say :

“Shall I help you, my friend?”

He raised his head and recognised M. de Gironse, who, with his hands in his pockets, was observing him with a delightful air of curiosity.

M. de Gironse had reached Marseilles on the previous evening. Feeling there was something serious in the air, he had hastened there so as not to lose the opportunity of dispelling the dreadful weariness under which he laboured. He had been awaiting a drama ever since the Republic had been proclaimed. He absolutely forgot that he belonged to the nobility and watched the outburst

of the people's anger as a disinterested observer. Searching at the bottom of his heart, he found he had more sympathy for the Democratic cause than for that of the Legitimists to which he was fatally attached by name. At Aix nobody made any ceremony about saying, that M. de Girusse was a regular "original" who found pleasure in shaking hands with workmen, and the nobility would, perhaps, have closed their mansions to him had he not borne one of the oldest names of Provence.

He had been running about the streets of Marseilles since the morning, watching the progress of the riot, occupying the most advantageous positions as a spectator, right in the middle of the scrimmage, so as not to lose the least detail. One thing, only, had disgusted him, the shot fired at the General. Otherwise, he found that the people generously risked their lives, that their anger was superb and their violence magnificent.

As soon as he had heard that the rioters were making barricades at the Place aux Œufs, he hastened there. He wanted to be present at the catastrophe. He penetrated within the barricades, mixed with the fighting men and firmly intended not to move until all was over.

Philippe stared at him in amazement. The Count stood there before him, attired in a black frock coat, with a soft felt hat on his head and smiling in a bantering manner. Under his arm, he carried a huge sabre, all rusty and covered with dust.

"What! you here!" exclaimed Philippe. "Are you one of us?"

M. de Girusse glanced at his weapon.

"Look, isn't it a fine sabre?" he said without answering. "They have just entrusted me with it for the defence of Liberty."

And then he related in a jeering way, how he had just been enrolled among the rioters. The latter, in need of arms, sought to procure them by all possible means. A locksmith had made the remark in the midst of one of the groups that the dealers in second-hand goods in the Rue Belzunce and the Rue Sainte Barbe must have some old arms in their shops. A band had at once set out to

secure them. M. de Girousse, urged on by curiosity, had followed the band and gone with them into the shops. It was in one of these that a workman had handed him the huge sabre which he carried under his arm.

"He gave it me," he added, "and made me swear to plunge it into the enemies of our country. I don't think I shall abide by my oath. But as I find the sabre looks very well under my arm, I'll keep it. Do you think any one of my ancestors, any one of those doughty warriors of the past, cut a better figure than I do at this moment?"

Philippe could not keep from laughing.

"I asked you a stupid question a little time ago," he said to the Count, with some bitterness. "I asked you if you were one of us. I forgot that you could only be here out of curiosity. You have come to see if the people know how to die. Well! I think you'll be satisfied with them."

The Republican had drawn himself up, and pointed out to the nobleman the burning, active crowd of workmen.

"Look at them," he resumed. "There is the flock your fathers sheared, and branded with a red-hot iron. For the third time in sixty years the flock is getting angry. I predict to you, that it will end by eating up the shepherds. Instead of urging it on to revolt, it would have been better to have given it liberty, and bread, which it requires to live. All the energies it is expending at this hour, in raising barricades, would then have been devoted to useful labour."

M. de Girousse no longer jeered. He had become grave. Philippe continued with violence:

"Your place is not here. You have come amidst our barricades as the patricians of ancient Rome went to the arena to see slaves die. Ah! notwithstanding your goodness, cruel blood runs in your veins. You are pestered with the curiosity of the wearied master; I see it, and our insurrection, this insurrection which will cause us tears, is merely a show for you. Believe me, you will do better to go away. We are not actors, we have no need of the pit."

The old Count had turned pale. He remained for an

instant motionless; then, as Philippe stooped down to take up his barrel, he said to him in a peaceful tone."

"My friend, will you allow me to help you?"

He grasped the barrel at one end, and Republican and Legitimist carried it together to the barricade and threw it down there.

"The deuce!" said M. de Girousse, "it wasn't heavy, but my sabre inconvenienced me considerably."

He rubbed his hands to get rid of the dust, and found himself face to face with Marius. After the first words of surprise, he resumed, smiling:

"Your brother has just been advising me to go away. He is right, I am only an inquisitive old fellow. I wish you would hide me somewhere."

Marius took him into the house where Fine and Joseph were, and the Count made himself comfortable on the third floor landing, at a window facing the square. What Philippe had said to him had made him profoundly sad.

Marius had merely come down to beg his brother to go and comfort Fine and the child, who were half dead with fright. He returned, after Philippe had promised to rejoin him. The latter wished particularly to take a look round the square. The six barricades were completed; at least, the rioters, being unable to find any more material, had renounced building them any higher. A heavy silence began to reign among the crowd, and the workmen seated themselves on the ground, resting while awaiting events. It was easy to see, from the lowered tone of voice, that the moment of the struggle was approaching.

What annoyed Philippe, was that there were so few efficient arms in the hands of the combatants. Fifty of them at the most had muskets. Some of the others carried sticks, billiard cues evidently stolen in the cafés; a great number of those who were without muskets were provided with curious kinds of weapons that had come from the shops of the second-hand dealers. Some had spits, old lances and sabres; others simply iron bars. Around the fountain which stood in the centre of the square, were a dozen workmen or so, sharpening their rusty blades on the cold stones of the basin. Cartridges

also were few in number. There were at the most a hundred or two taken from the ammunition pouches of the National Guards who had been disarmed.

Philippe understood that the barricades could not resist long, but he was determined not to discourage anyone by showing his anxiety. He confined himself to advising them to occupy the houses adjoining the barricades, in the hope that the assailants would retire if a shower of projectiles were cast on them from the roofs and windows.

Several houses had already been invaded. The rioters hammered at the doors of the lodgings they wished to occupy, threatening to break them in if they were not opened. Then, they insisted on having the keys of the doors leading to the flat roofs, and made every window a loophole, and every roof a stronghold. They laboured solely, for nearly half an hour, carrying stones up into the houses. Once above, they tore away and broke up the tiles, and incumbered the tops of the dwellings with rubbish, which they intended throwing on the soldiers' heads.

When Philippe was satisfied that all the arrangements had been completed, he decided to rejoin his brother. He had placed himself at the head of the men who were to occupy the house where Marius had hidden Fine and Joseph. This house was at the corner of the Grande Rue, and the Place aux Œufs, on the right, coming from the Cours. Philippe foresaw that the barricade in the Grande Rue would be the most vigorously attacked, and he was not without uneasiness as to the danger that would be incurred by the persons who had sought refuge there, and who would be in the midst of the fighting.

He only allowed the most devoted men to enter the building, and made them vow to defend the door to their last breath. After having placed them on the roof and at the windows, he returned to the landing on the third story, where he found M. de Girousse who pointed out a door to him and simply said:

"They're expecting you."

Whilst Philippe had been settling all this, Mathéus had ascended the steps of the house which was on the other

side of the square. He had seen the Republican at the windows, and his quiet, rascally smile returned like a grimace to his lips.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT MATHÉUS, THE FORESEER, DID NOT FORESEE.

THE interview was short and touching. Philippe took little Joseph for a moment on his knees, and felt quite affected.

"I entrust him to you," he said to Fine and Marius. "I shall, perhaps, never see him again, but I know he will always have a father and mother."

Marius remained silent. He understood that his brother imagined he was performing a duty, and he did not say one word to retain him. Fine had great tears bulging out of her eyes.

Philippe seemed to be making an effort to tear himself away from the room which appeared full of mute despair. He wished to escape the cowardly feeling of tenderness that was gaining possession of him. He gave his son a last kiss, and placed him on Fine's knees.

Then, walking feverishly, as if to stir up his thoughts, he moved towards the window facing the Grande Rue, and after casting a look outside, turned towards the young woman and said:

"You mustn't remain on that chair. Come and sit here, away from the window. The bullets might enter there."

He stopped, and could not stifle a cry that rose to his lips.

"Ah! War is a terrible thing! I have wished for it with all my strength, and behold, it places those I love in jeopardy."

His head fell on his hand in despair. He was on the point of bursting into nervous sobbing, when moving towards the door, he continued in a brutal tone:

“Are you coming Marius?”

Then on the threshold, he bid a last adieu to Fine and Joseph, who watched him depart. At that moment he and his brother thought no more of M. de Cazalis; and any idea of a surprise was far from their minds. They simply feared that the young woman and child might be subjected to brutal treatment by the rioters and soldiers amidst the disturbance.

On the landing, they found M. de Gironse who appeared to be hiding beside the window, and watching attentively.

“I say, do you know that villainous creature over there?” he inquired of them.

And he pointed with his finger to Mathéus, who was standing on the other side of the square.

“I’ve been following his movements for the last half hour,” continued the Count. “He has not ceased watching this house. Assuredly he must be actuated by some evil design.”

The two brothers looked in the direction he indicated.

“Is it the man with the red hair?” inquired Marius.

“Precisely,” answered the Count. “I detest red-haired people. But then, I have a particularly good scent for detecting rascals. That one has evil-looking eyes, and a quiet smile that predicts nothing good.”

“But,” said Philippe, “I know the man. He’s a violent democrat. I remember having heard him deliver incendiary speeches in the clubs. I never thoroughly examined him, but I confess I always had a kind of repugnance for him. Look, he’s staring this way again.”

The young man was seized with vague mistrust. He fancied Mathéus might, perhaps, be an instigating agent of the authorities, one of those traitors who glide in among the democrats, and lead them on to extremities, so as to hand them over to the police afterwards.

Marius had other fears to which he did not dare give utterance.

“Come,” he said to Philippe, “we must find out why that man is watching the house in that way.”

They went down and mixed with the crowd, and while

feigning not to pay attention to Mathéus, took care not to lose sight of him. They walked about the square in this way for ten minutes, without relaxing their supervision. Mathéus, in the meanwhile, was spoiling all his beautiful calculations by being over confident. He had so correctly foreseen each event, everything had succeeded so well with him up to then, that he felt sure of victory. He thought he had already triumphed, and omitted his customary prudence, imagining that in the scrimmage, everyone had lost his head, and nobody was paying the least attention to him.

When he perceived the two brothers, he ceased examining the house, and assumed a happy-go-lucky air. He cast down his head, and seemed lost in deep thought. Then Marius and Philippe saw him leave the steps, and wander among the crowd, looking very perplexed. In truth, he was thinking if he ought not to go and steal the child then, before the outbreak, so as to avoid compromising himself, by remaining any longer amidst the barricades. It was only a question of getting rid of Fine and that did not trouble him much; he would use a gag, he thought, and if absolutely necessary, a knife. What really worried him, and gave him an air of such profound thought, was that horrid carrot wig, which up to then had served him as a flag, but which he now wished to get rid of at any price.

He said to himself rightly, that it nailed him to his post, deprived him of his liberty of action: he could never carry a child off in his arms, so long as he remained "the man with the carrot hair" as they called him, the impetuous Tribune who had spoken on one occasion of reducing Marseilles to ashes.

Mathéus walked about for a long time, without being able to make up his mind as to what he would do. He understood all the gravity of a change of physiognomy. Now, when Philippe and Marius noticed the sly glances he was casting around him, they felt certain M. de Girousse was not wrong. All at once he made a movement like a man taking a resolution, and advancing towards the door of one of the houses on the square, entered it after

looking round to see that no one was spying him. A few minutes later, the two brothers, who had kept their eyes fixed on the door of the house, saw a person make his appearance there who was slightly bald and wore the same attire as the man with the carrotty wig. Philippe repressed a cry of rage. He had recognised Mathéus at a glance.

"Ah! the wretch!" he muttered in a choking voice to his brother, "he's the *fidus Achates* of Cazalis, the man who tried to steal Joseph at Ayasse's."

"I suspect some foul play," murmured Marius, who had turned pale.

"I see it all now! it was that cursed red hair that led me astray; I felt I knew the man, but I only saw him at night, and couldn't remember who he was."

Marius interrupted his brother.

"Every minute is precious," he said. "Cazalis must be there in the dark. He has set one of his creatures to dog your foot-steps so as to ruin you, and at the climax, has sent this wretch here to get possession of Joseph. I don't understand how it has all been done; however, we must first of all get rid of this man. We'll decide on further action afterwards."

Philippe, dumbfounded at the thought of all the misfortunes he had brought about, remained silent.

"You understand," continued Marius, "we cannot have him arrested by accusing him of an abduction he has not yet committed. And besides, we would find nobody here to seize him by the collar."

"You are mistaken," said the Republican, whose eyes suddenly sparkled. "I have an idea. Wait a minute."

Philippe ran towards a party of workmen, who were entirely devoted to him, spoke to them in an undertone for a few moments, and returning to Marius said:

"Look, our man is already caught in the trap."

The workmen had dispersed; then, one by one, they had manœuvred so as to surround Mathéus, while the latter, suspecting nothing, was strolling about with the air of a placid bourgeois.

"You go home," said one of the workmen to him in a brutal tone.

"Wait," observed another, "this citizen is not unknown to me."

"Eh!" exclaimed a third, "what have you done with your carroty wig?"

"He's a false brother! he's a false brother!" shouted all the party.

This cry ran all over the square. A gathering was formed and in the midst of it Mathéus was violently hustled. A rioter searched him, and the red wig which was found in one of his pockets, was passed from hand to hand as a proof of guilt. They spoke of nothing less than hanging the wretch, for all who remembered the part he had played, shouted out that he was an instigating agent, a creature of the police, and that they must make an example of him, by stringing him up to the nearest lantern.

Mathéus trembled with fright. There was no reasoning within him at that moment, and he was not a bit surprised when he saw Philippe, of all people in the world, advance to his assistance.

"Come, my friends," said the latter to the angry workmen, "don't dirty your hands by killing the man. It will suffice to keep him within sight. He might be useful to us later on. Only, if he attempts to run away, send a bullet into his back."

By the young man's order two workmen caught hold of the wretch, and shut him up in a little shop, one of them standing on guard at the door with a loaded musket.

Mathéus' reflections were rather sad. He cursed himself a thousand times, for having had the strange idea of taking off his wig, but he did not for a moment suspect the part the Cayols had played in his arrest. Philippe having feigned not to recognise him, he imagined his misadventure had occurred solely from the rioters taking him for a police spy, an accusation he had been unable to refute. At the bottom of his heart, he even laughed at his adversaries for having helped him. However, he did not despair beyond measure, for he had always looked upon the workmen as asses, and he said to himself that he would assuredly find a means of escaping when the

barricades were attacked. It was merely an annoyance. He must wait.

Philippe had withdrawn with Marius into a corner, and was saying to him in an animated undertone:

"I preferred not to let him be hanged, for if we conquer, this man will be a terrible arm in our hands against Cazalis."

"And if we are beaten?" inquired Marius.

"If we are beaten," Philippe answered, sullenly, "I entrust my child to you; you will protect him. Do not overwhelm me with reproaches. I must go straight ahead, without looking backward."

The conversation between the two brothers was interrupted by a murmur that arose in the middle of the square. It was about two o'clock. More than an hour had elapsed since the barricades had been completed, and the rioters were waiting. They had taken advantage of this moment of respite to organize a plan of defence and make their final arrangements. Since the arrest of Mathéus a silence of death reigned all around. Each workman, rivetted to his post, was gazing fixedly ahead, with his loaded musket beside him, and all his thoughts bent on vengeance.

Suddenly, those who were guarding the barricade in the Grande Rue, perceived two persons advance and boldly enter the stronghold. On hearing the murmur, that had greeted them, Philippe approached and recognised M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier. The ship-owner hastened forward to meet him.

"For pity's sake," he said to him, "if you have any power over these men, dissuade them from this fratricidal struggle."

"My child," murmured the priest on his side, "I have come to you, to beseech you with joined hands, to avoid the effusion of blood."

Philippe shook his head without answering. He was annoyed at their arrival. He felt more guilty and upset in their presence. The ship-owner continued:

"You see, I come, as I promised you I would, to place myself between the people's fire and that of the soldiers. I bitterly regret at this moment, that I did not devote a few days to winning popularity with the work-

men, so as to make them listen to me and follow my advice."

"I can do nothing," Philippe ended by saying. "These men are exasperated, they listen to me because I think as they do, that the people have to take vengeance; but, if I were to speak to them of pardon and forgiveness, they would turn their backs on me. Try it yourself."

The workmen had, little by little, drawn near, and M. Martelly went up to them.

"My friends," he said, "I am directed to announce that justice shall be done you. I have just seen the Commissary of the Government."

These words were listened to amidst silence and sullen anger. After a moment, the entire crowd answered in one single cry:

"It is too late!"

Abbé Chastanier then addressed each workman. But they turned away, one by one, in ferocious ill-humour, without listening. When he told them that the Almighty forbade the shedding of blood, they answered him:

"Why didn't you say that this morning to the National Guard?"

M. Martelly, on his side, was no more fortunate. They knew him as a man of independent mind, but they also knew he was rich, and they, perhaps, accused him in their hearts of giving way to fright.

The priest and ship-owner returned to Philippe in despair. The latter would have been glad to see them succeed, but he did not dare assist them openly. Thinking of his faults, of which he now saw the consequences, of the danger which threatened his own near relatives, he felt alarmed himself.

"I warned you," he said, "that any attempt at pacification would be useless. The people want to fight, and will fight. Let us do our duty."

He stopped to listen. A muffled sound, a distant clinking of metal, came from the Grande Rue.

"Here are the soldiers and National Guard," he continued in a grave tone of voice.

And he rapidly withdrew, after having pressed the hand of Marius, who hastened upstairs to rejoin Fine. M.

Martelly and Abbé Chastanier advanced towards the barricade in the Grand Rue, behind which Philippe had taken up a position.

Once more there was silence, deadly silence, and amidst it was heard the regular, heavy tramp of the military. The rioters, bending down and sheltering themselves, waited.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATTACK.

M. DE CAZALIS thanks to his National Guard uniform, had been able to follow all the different phases of the riot. So far back as the morning, when Mathéus left him opposite the Prefecture, he had slipped into the ranks of the first company he had met, which happened to be that of Sauvaire, and the ex-deputy was thus able to be present at the brush with the people in the Rue de la Palud.

He had but a vague idea of the plans formed by Mathéus, and was urged by curiosity to follow all his manœuvres. After the barricade had been captured he proceeded with Sauvaire's company to the Cannebière, and witnessed all the unfortunate events that had occurred there. When he saw the procession led by the spy, go by with the corpse, he understood that a fight was inevitable, and remembered the rendezvous his accomplice had given him. But when a panic of terror had dispersed the multitude, he felt much perplexed. Prudence told him not to abandon his new companions-in-arms; so, for over two hours, he remained on the Place de la Révolution with the company, which was awaiting orders to march. What made him particularly uneasy, was not having a better idea of Mathéus' plans, for the latter had merely told him to join him at the spot where barricades would be thrown up. He was suddenly relieved of his perplexity by an order, brought by a man on horseback, which Captain Sauvaire communicated to the National Guard in these terms:

“My boys, the country has need of us. Forward, march!”

Never had the ex-stevedore made such an eloquent speech. He felt so enthusiastic at himself, that he began to ascend the Cannebière at the head of his men, with the air of a conqueror, hardly giving a thought to the danger he was about to incur.

M. de Cazalis felt very much surprised when the Company turned to the left, instead of going towards the Rue de Rome. His idea was that Mathéus had been making efforts to bring about the struggle near the Cours Bonaparte, and he could not understand how his accomplice would be able to steal Joseph, if the fighting took place in the old town. From that moment he gave up trying to understand, but as the company reached the Grande Rue he caught sight of the barricade and that was sufficient. He said to himself, he had kept the appointment, and he awaited events.

The Cours Belzunce was full of troops. There were two platoons of infantry, and about three hundred artillerymen. As soon as Sauvaire's company arrived, the major who had received orders to attack the barricade, had a short interview with the captain.

“I was awaiting you,” he said to Sauvaire. “My orders are to show as much consideration as is possible, and it occurred to me that as the sight of the infantry would be likely to exasperate the workmen, it might be best for the National Guard to march on ahead and make a final effort at conciliation. Speak to the rioters as a fellow-townsmen.”

From that moment Sauvaire imagined that the destiny of France was in his hands. He formed his company into column and advanced resolutely into the Grande Rue, the tramp of his men ringing out in the silence. The major set his troops in motion behind the National Guard.

When the captain found himself at fifty paces from the barricade, he commanded: “Halt!” and approached it alone. On hearing his word of command, some fifteen rioters showed themselves. The ex-master stevedore, seeing the musket barrels flashing at his

breast, gave a shudder of fright, but out of vanity, put on a good appearance externally.

"Eh! the deuce!" he said, "I'm a friend, don't fire. We're all Marseillais boys; we can't cut each other's throats in a family circle. There are none but good fellows here. Is it not so? Come now, throw down your arms and let each go his own way."

There was but one cry in response to these exhortations.

"It is too late!"

"It is never too late to act like reasonable men," continued Sauvaire. "In your place, I'd return to duty. They must have told you that the Commissary of the Government had admitted the justice of your claims. What more do you want?"

"What we want is blood, withdraw!" screamed the rioters.

Sauvaire, while speaking, had been attentively following the workmen's movements. Suddenly, he fancied he heard a strange sound and was about to retreat, when a powerful voice shouted from behind the barricade:

"Look out, stoop down!"

Sauvaire let himself fall heavily to the ground, and the men behind him bent themselves.

At the same moment a discharge from the barricades and neighbouring houses, passed over the heads of the attacking party with a terrible roar, but thanks to the warning, which had caused the soldiers to curve their necks, only about a dozen men were wounded. The attack had been so sudden and unexpected, that the National Guards, seized with panic, had fled. Sauvaire threw himself to the left, against the houses, and hurriedly rejoined his company which had reformed a hundred paces further on.

During this time an incident had occurred, behind the barricade. M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier had remained among the workmen, exhorting them to avoid the effusion of blood. Whilst Sauvaire was speaking, the ship-owner had noticed that some of the more furious ones were preparing to fire, and it was he who had shouted to the soldiers:

“Look out, stoop down!”

When the rioters perceived what little effect their discharge had produced, they surrounded M. Martelly in a rage. Philippe, who had come down from the barricade, saw the danger his former employer was running, and, to save him, ordered two of the rioters to put him and the priest under arrest and not to lose sight of them. Ultimately both were taken to the little shop where Mathéus was confined.

The troops, however, advanced again. The major had given the infantry orders to take the barricade by assault, and a few of the National Guards, exasperated at the volley they had received, had mixed with the soldiers. Among these was M. de Cazalis. Having perceived Philippe at the top of the barricade, he had but one thought, to hide behind something or in some doorway, and kill his enemy.

As the new attacking column was about to rush upon the barricade, they were repulsed by a second discharge. This volley was much more murderous than the first. A captain, mortally wounded, was carried in a dying condition into a neighbouring house, and more than thirty men were incapacitated from taking any further part in the fray. The major then understood that the struggle was unequal and that he would never capture the barricade by storming it from the front, as the rioters, hidden behind all sorts of shelter, were able to take deadly aim, whilst those attacking could not do so. From that moment, soldiers and National Guards dispersed in the Grande Rue, and throwing themselves on either side of it, along the walls, opened a skirmishing fire. Shot then followed shot, irregularly, here and there; and as soon as a man showed himself, he was certain to get a bullet whistling at his ears.

Sauvaire had sought refuge under a large doorway. The worthy man began to think the business of a National Guard no joke. His vanity had first of all been tickled, by the importance the rank of captain gave him, in the grave events that were occurring; but, when he saw they were fighting in earnest, his bourgeois pity got the better

of him; and he watched the men falling around him, with a feeling of sorrow and horror. He felt as if he would like to put a stop to the fighting; first of all, so as not to run the risk of receiving a bullet, and then so as to be spared the disagreeable sight of a battle. Personally he would not have killed a fly, he only thought of securing his own safety and of coming to the assistance of friends who might be mixed up in the disturbance.

It happened by chance that he was hiding under the same doorway as M. de Cazalis. Recognising the ex-deputy, he repressed a gesture of astonishment, and being aware of the hatred he bore the Cayols, he rightly attributed his presence, under a disguise, to thoughts of vengeance. He had noticed Philippe on the barricade, and he now began to watch M. de Cazalis, who, with his musket on a level with his hip, seemed to be waiting. The Republican having stood up to reload his weapon, the Legitimist brought his gun sharply to his shoulder and fired, but Sauvaire, feigning to slip, knocked up against him, and the bullet was flattened out against the façade of a house.

M. de Cazalis was exasperated, but did not dare show his temper to the captain, under whose orders he had voluntarily placed himself. He slid another charge into his gun, repressing an outburst of rage, whilst Sauvaire said to himself:

“Eh! the deuce! the Cayols are my friends. Little Marius gave me many a good laugh in the old days with Clairon. I won't let them be killed like that. We must be on the alert.”

And from that moment, he forgot he was a captain and only thought of affording little Marius pleasure, by saving Philippe.

The latter had no idea of the danger he had just escaped. Excited by the struggle, he fought as one in despair. All his doubts had left him, he imagined he was defending his child. He fired upon the troops, because the troops were firing on the house where Fine and Joseph were. That was his great anxiety. At every instant, he raised his eyes towards the window of the room, and turned pale when he saw a bullet shatter one of the panes

of glass to pieces. M. de Girusse, with superb contempt for peril, leant out, every now and then, from an adjoining window to get a better view. He tranquillized Philippe with a wave of the hand and then enjoyed, as an amateur, the sight afforded by the barricade.

The struggle continued thus for nearly half an hour, soldiers and rioters exchanging bullets at distant intervals. There were awful silences of two or three minutes; then came a shot, a cry, followed by another silence which was still more oppressive than the previous one. The soldiers' red trousers made capital targets for the workmen, who were thus able to kill a great many men. As for themselves they were better sheltered; nevertheless, as soon as ever a shot was fired from a window, that window was at once riddled with bullets. The rioters, who had gone up to the tops of the houses, and from there cast down showers of stones, suffered more. Men were several times seen to topple over from the roofs and come down on the pavement in a coadjulated mass, picked off like sparrows.

The fighting might have gone on in this manner until the evening. This skirmishing sort of warfare was in reality, much more murderous than a bold, decisive attack would have been, and some thirty corpses were already weltering in pools of blood on the ground.

Marius had descended into the street at the first shot. Not having been able to prevent the struggle, he wished at least to assist those who were fighting. By his care, an ambulance was established in a shop on the square, and he displayed great activity in seeing that the wounded were carried there. At one moment as he was passing behind the barricade, a man fell beside him mortally struck. He leant over him, and was astonished to find it was Charles Blétry, the dishonest clerk of the firm of Daste and Degans. The unfortunate fellow recognised him also, and seeing the young man hastening to attend to him, he said with a faint smile:

"It's useless, Monsieur Marius, it's all over, I am going to die. Ah! Heaven is good indeed to have sent you to me!"

He continued with an effort, his fingers already becoming rigid :

"I swear to you I never discharged my gun. I was led astray by friends, I had to do as others did. Listen, I want you to render me a service. Promise me you will perform my last wish."

Blétry raised himself, painfully, and unfastened a belt round his waist. While handing it to Marius, he was seized with a convulsion, and as the belt fell to the ground a few pieces of money came out of it. As soon as the former clerk was in a condition to speak, he said :

"That belt contains a hundred francs. Kindly hand it to Messrs. Daste and Degans, and tell them it is not my fault if I have not been able to reimburse them all the money I turned to such bad account."

And as Marius looked at him in astonishment, he murmured in a voice that was dying away :

"You don't know. They let me off two years. I have now been out of prison for three years, and during that time have been working as a navy. On the hundred and thirty francs I have been earning each month, I have made a point of handing a hundred, regularly, to my former employers. I have not been able to refund more than three thousand and a few hundred francs, but I had hopes of earning more later on, and I had intended devoting all my life to the repayment of my debt. Death has come too soon."

The words were distorted in his throat. He had a short death struggle, and expired, his features convulsed and his limbs rigid.

Marius had felt a sort of respect in presence of this terrible death. The wretched being who was lying there, seemed so full of grief and remorse. He picked up the belt and was going away with it, when he heard a dreadful noise in the direction of the Rues de la Lune d'Or and Vieille Monnaie. All at once he saw the soldiers and National Guards advance from those streets and invade the square.

During the few minutes Marius had spent with Blétry serious events had been occurring. While the firing continued at the barricade in the Grande Rue, two other

bodies of troops had attacked the rioters by the narrow thoroughfares in the old town.

A column came to lay siege to the Place aux Œufs by the Rue Requis Novis, but on reaching the Rue Pierre qui Rage, and perceiving the barricade the rioters had erected there, it halted. A police commissary, who was at the head, then advanced, and exhorted the workmen to return peacefully to their occupations. The only answer they gave was that the people had been provoked; and, almost at the same moment, he had his arm broken with a bullet. He had barely time to withdraw, when firing became general, and was accompanied by an avalanche of stones and tiles falling on the soldiers' heads. There was a noise like the rumbling sound of thunder, and the street became full of smoke. The soldiers in surprise, threw themselves on either side, along the houses; and a skirmishing warfare commenced as in the Grande Rue. These encounters at cross roads are terrible, for a few men are often able to keep an army at bay.

While firing was thus proceeding at two points, another column, destined to be more fortunate, advanced towards the barricade, blocking up the Grande Rue, from the side of the Law Courts. This column which had come from the Hotel de Ville, did not approach very near. As soon as one of the sentinels had fired, it withdrew; and seeing it was impossible to carry the entrenchment without artillery, decided on turning the position.

It, therefore, entered the Rue Belzunce, where it found some thirty rioters who fired and then ran away, some into the Rue des Marquises, the others into the Rues Sainte Marthe, Sainte Barbe and Moulin d' Huile. The soldiers followed them at double quick time, receiving a few shots to which they answered, and searching, moreover, two or three houses where they arrested a certain number of people; but they did not dare enter the Rue des Marquises, which would have led them straight to the Place aux Œufs. This street, which they supposed to be barricaded, seemed to them narrow and dangerous and they feared being crushed beneath an avalanche of objects cast from the roofs and windows.

The column continued turning the stronghold. On reaching the Place Sainte Martin, it divided: one part going into the Rue de la Lune d'Or and the other into the Rue de la Vieille Monnaie. The idea was to issue in a body on the Place aux Œufs, where as a matter of fact, two of the detachments arrived almost simultaneously.

The soldiers rushed on to the barricades, which on this side had been less solidly built, and the rioters, surprised at this irresistible charge, fled in disorder, seeking refuge in the houses. There they stopped the column, for a few moments, by opening a well-fed fire upon it from the windows. But this fire soon slackened, and the soldiers passing beneath the bullets at the double, found themselves in the centre of the Place aux Œufs. When Marius perceived the uniforms of the conquerors, he understood his brother would be lost if he were not able to place him beyond danger of arrest. He ran to the barricade in the Grande Rue, where Philippe, with his back turned to the square, had been so busy with the defence on that side, that he had not perceived the victory of the military in the rear. Marius soon found him, but as the two brothers set out towards the house where Fine and Joseph were, they saw that they would not have time to reach the door, so they rushed in at another one, which was opposite, and barricaded the entrance in despair, not daring to refer to their mutual alarm at being obliged to abandon the young woman and child.

A frightful tumult reigned on the square. As soon as the rioters saw the soldiers and National Guard advancing to secure the position, they imitated Philippe and Marius and fled for refuge into the adjoining houses. The columns attacking the barricades in the Grande Rue, and the Rue Requis Novis, were at first astounded to see the firing cease. Then, guessing what was taking place, they removed the abandoned obstructions and advanced to join the conquerors. The square was thus full of troops, preparing to besiege the houses amidst a most deafening din. It was at that moment that the man watching over the three prisoners in the little shop, fled. Mathéus slipped into the crowd and disappeared; whilst M. Mar-

telly and Abbé Chastanier, sad and motionless, remained standing on the threshold, in the expectation of terrible reprisals; and, occasionally, the inquisitive head of M. Girousse showed itself at the window, which he had not left since the commencement of the action.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH MATHÉUS, AT LAST, GETS JOSEPH IN HIS ARMS.

SAUVAIRE had lost sight of M. de Cazalis on entering the stronghold, and was furious at not being able to discover where he could have got to, after having had the trouble of watching him, for nearly an hour, under a doorway. The worthy man continued to ignore his rank of captain. He had one fixed idea, that of coming to the assistance of the brother of his friend Marius. He turned about on the square, anxious and embarrassed, when it all at once occurred to him that Philippe must be hidden in Fine's old abode. He looked at the house and caught sight of the head of M. de Girousse.

"Eh! I say, you, up there!" he shouted to the old Count, "come down quick and open the door?"

M. de Girousse who was extremely anxious about Philippe, decided to go down, knowing that the two brothers had taken refuge in the house opposite, and hoping to be of some help to them, but when he was once below in the corridor, he found himself in the presence of the rioters, who had fastened the bolts, and would not allow him to go out.

He succeeded, however, with some trouble, in making them set the door ajar, and after pushing him out, they again closed it. Sauvaire and M. de Girousse found themselves face to face.

"Eh! the deuce!" exclaimed the ex-master stevedore, "you should have left the door open. I am going to have you arrested."

The nobleman examined the captain with curiosity.

“You are going to have me arrested,” he said; “Well! arrest me yourself, and kindly conduct me to the persons who are over there.”

He pointed to M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier. Sauvaire accompanied him, and apologized, when he heard he had put his hand on a Count and wealthy landlord.

“It only required transportation,” said M. de Girousse laughing, “for my day to be complete!”

He then held a whispered conversation with the ship-owner, and explained to him the position.

“We saw nothing of all that,” said M. Martelly, “they shut us up in that shop, in the company of an individual who looked like a regular villain. Do you say Philippe and Marius are hidden in that house there?”

“Yes, and I am very much afraid they have been arrested, but the worst of it is, that I have left Marius’ wife and Philippe’s child in that other house.”

This news completed making the ship-owner quite sad. Abbé Chastanier, however, pointed out that Fine and Joseph were not running any very great danger: if the house were sacked, there would always be time to intervene, but they must think above all of the two brothers, and endeavour to assist them to escape. The misfortune was, that it seemed almost impossible to do anything to help them.

In the meanwhile the troops who had invaded the rioters’ stronghold were not inactive. A few shots were still being fired from windows, here and there, and this had to be put a stop to. So the order was given to take, by assault, all the houses that were closed, and on the roofs of which the insurgents were discharging their last cartridges. A few sappers were sent forward and these began hacking at the doors with their axes.

Sauvaire was in despair. He wished to lead the soldiers away from the dwelling where he supposed Philippe was hidden, but could see no way of doing so. He got his men together, posted them on the opposite side of the square, and set them searching other buildings. But unfortunately a shot was fired from the very house he wished to protect. A lieutenant was wounded, and all the soldiers rushed towards the door.

"The idiots!" murmured Sauvaire, "what need had they to wound that man! Now my young friend's affair is settled."

He approached, wishing at least to be one of the first to enter the place.

While these events were occurring, Mathéus and M. de Cazalis were engaged in animated conversation in a corner of the square. The spy, with his piercing eyes, had perceived his master in the midst of a crowd as soon as he got out of the shop. When he had taken him aside, he said, in a jeering tone:

"Well! don't you congratulate me? I have been doing a tremendous lot of work."

"I didn't see you on the barricade," answered the ex-deputy.

"Of course! those simpletons took the precaution of placing me beyond danger of the bullets, by shutting me up in a shop, and I feel very thankful to them for doing so. Come, victory is on our side."

"Where did you take the child to?"

"Eh! you're in too great a hurry. I'll hand you the child presently. Look! he is there, in that house, where they are bursting open the door."

Mathéus then explained to M. de Cazalis what he had done, and what there still remained to do. He was certain of success.

"However," he added, "we must act promptly. They imprisoned with me, I was unable to understand why, two friends of the Cayols. Look! they're still standing on the threshold of our common gaol. I am afraid their presence will be to our disadvantage."

M. de Cazalis looked, and recognised M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier. He did not see M. de Grousse, who was turning his back to him.

"Bah!" he murmured, "they're not troubling about us. To work, Mathéus! I'll double the promised reward if you succeed."

The sappers had just given the first strokes of the axe, which were producing dull thuds on the door.

"And do you know where that villain Philippe has got to?" inquired M. de Cazalis.

"I hope he's been arrested," answered Mathéus, "in any case he will be caught if he has taken refuge in the house. Have no anxiety, his affair is settled, he'll get at least ten years' transportation."

"I'd sooner finish with him here. I had him at the end of my gun. Aren't you afraid that if he be in the house, he will interfere with your plans?"

"Bah! he's hidden at the bottom of some cupboard. Look out! the door is giving way. Don't meddle with anything, watch me act, if it amuses you, and as soon as I have the child, follow me quickly. We'll settle our account later on."

Mathéus left his master in the centre of the square and mixed with the soldiers. The axes of the sappers had cut through the woodwork of the door, and although the hinges and lock still held good, it was on the point of being broken down. Sauvaire had followed this performance with anxiety. He had counted on gathering his own men together, and entering the house first. Just as the door began to give way, he felt a hand on his arm, and turning round, recognised his old manager Cadet, Fine's brother. The young man dragged him quickly aside, and in a choking voice asked:

"What has happened? Have you seen my sister?"

But before the ex-master stevedore could answer, he continued:

"I and my men have been confined to the office since this morning. The authorities, being aware of my opinions, placed a picket of National Guards at my door, and I have only just been able to escape. I ran to my brother-in-law's lodging, on the Cours Bonaparte, and found the house empty. Goodness, gracious! what has happened? Speak, quick!"

"Good Heavens!" murmured Sauvaire, "a misfortune never comes singly. The whole family must be in this house."

"Do you think my sister is there?"

"Eh! I don't know. What I do know is that I saw Philippe on the barricade fighting like a maniac. Ah! my poor Cadet. I'm very much afraid all this will end very badly."

But I forgot: your enemy is prowling about the square."

"What enemy?"

"M. de Cazalis. He's disguised as a National Guard."

Cadet shuddered. All at once he perceived the door had been broken in.

"Let's run there quick!" he exclaimed.

As soon as the entrance was clear, a swarm of soldiers rushed forward, but three or four shots were fired from the staircase and the besiegers withdrew in disorder. For a few moments no one dared penetrate within the passage. The insurgents had spent their last cartridges, and after this show of defence, had bounded up on to the roof to try and escape. After the first moment of panic, the soldiers made up their minds to advance cautiously to the foot of the staircase; then, seeing they met with no resistance, they invaded the house and searched in every corner.

Sauvaire and Cadet had committed the imprudence of retiring a short distance away, for the purpose of talking, and when they endeavoured to approach the door again, they found themselves behind a regular crowd, which prevented them advancing. Notwithstanding all their efforts they had to beat time a long while, and when they at last entered, they were only able to get up the staircase very slowly, on account of its being so full of soldiers and National Guards.

As they reached the third floor they were jostled by a man who was running away and knocking up against everyone. This individual, whom the besiegers took for a terrified lodger, had a child in his arms. He passed so rapidly, half hiding his charge beneath his frock coat, that Cadet did not get a good view of him; the young man, however, turned round, as if feeling a presentiment that something was wrong, but the man had then already descended five or six stairs. Fine's brother, pushed on by Sauvaire, who had seen nothing, continued to ascend, and soon found himself at the entrance to the little lodging.

This door was wide open, and in the middle of the first room, Fine lay unconscious on the ground. Joseph had disappeared.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW PHILIPPE FIRED A LAST SHOT.

FINE'S anguish during the struggle, had been terrible. Each shot had made her tremble, for she thought to herself with horror, that the bullet had perhaps killed one of hers. She would have liked to have been below in the street, sharing the peril of Marius and Philippe, but the necessity of looking after Joseph confined her to that room where she was dying with anxiety. The poor child was as white as a sheet and his teeth were set firmly together, but he was not crying. With his face hidden in the young woman's lap, and his little arms clutching her waist, he stood motionless and mute.

On several occasions bullets entered by the window, cutting up the furniture and becoming embedded in the wall. Fine gazed at the holes made by these projectiles with stupor. She tried to make herself smaller, caught up Joseph, and clasped him closely in her arms. She did not care about herself, but an icy shiver ran through her frame when she thought that a bullet might rebound and strike the child she was pressing to her bosom.

This torment lasted more than an hour, she listened with anxiety to the least sound. All at once from the tumult that arose from the Square, she understood that the barricades had been carried. She felt relieved, but this feeling was soon followed by increased anxiety. As the firing had ceased, she ventured to approach the window, and throw a glance outside.

Suddenly she was seized with the most horrible fear. She asked herself why Marius and Philippe had not come upstairs again after the barricades had been taken? They ought to have hurried up there, to hide themselves beside her. If they had not come, it was because they were taken prisoners or perhaps killed. Her mind which was tormented with the most frightful thoughts, would admit of no other solution. Then, it seemed to her that she saw her husband and brother-in-law, stretched out welter-

ing in their blood, or being led away to prison by the soldiers, and these pictures, which she conjured up in her terrible grief, caused her to burst out sobbing.

As she was gazing on the square, she perceived the troops rushing towards the house. She rapidly withdrew from the window, and almost immediately heard the blows of the axes. Joseph began to fret; his fright which had hitherto been mute, now showed itself in most piercing cries. He called his father, clung to Fine's neck, yelled out that he didn't want the soldiers to come and take him.

The poor child's shrieks had the effect of causing the young woman to completely lose her head. She rushed on to the staircase, wanted to go down and run to Marius and Philippe. But she had not reached the second floor before she heard the door give way and fall in. At the same instant the rioters who were hidden in the corridor hastened upstairs, after having discharged their weapons. For a moment she hesitated; a muffled sound came from the vestibule, and she soon heard the footsteps of the besiegers approaching her. She remained firm, and would, perhaps, have stayed there, if, leaning over the banister, she had not caught sight of the man who was coming up first. That man was Mathéus. She thought herself in presence of the phantom of her despair. As if fascinated, with her eyes increased in volume with horror, she ascended the stairs one by one, retreating before Mathéus who never ceased glaring at her. As she entered the room, and before she had time to shut herself in, he sprang upon her, and tore Joseph from her arms. She uttered a faint cry; which was the only defence she could offer, for she was broken-down with emotion and staggering on her legs. When she no longer felt the child in her arms, she stretched her hands out before her as if to regain possession of the dear treasure, and, encountering naught but emptiness, fell stiff to the floor.

None of the soldiers who were searching the house noticed this scene, but the abduction had all the same been witnessed by two people in a neighbouring building.

The house in which Marius and Philippe had taken refuge by chance, stood at the corner of the square on

the other side of the Grande Rue. By a happy circumstance the two brothers were the only insurgents who had entered it, and as soon as they were inside, they had bolted the door. The staircase was silent and deserted and the tenants who were barricaded in their respective dwellings, took very good care not to show themselves. Marius and Philippe sat down for a moment on the first stair, and held council. They hardly knew how they would be able to escape the search of the soldiers who, from one moment to another, might burst the door open. The only chance remaining to them was to escape by the roofs; but this retreat would be very dangerous; and, besides, although the peril of remaining where they were was intense, they wished to do so in order to make sure that Fine and Joseph ran no risk.

"We ought not to have abandoned them," said Philippe; "it was cowardly on our part, to have thought only of our own personal safety."

"Don't let us despair," answered Marius, who had been endeavouring to comfort himself, whilst trying to assuage his brother's anxiety. "We should have perhaps done ourselves needless harm. Fine is strong and courageous."

"No matter, I'll only consent to fly when my mind's easy on their account. Listen! They're breaking in a door. Let us go up quick."

They ascended to the first floor and saw with the greatest alarm, that the house which was being besieged was the one opposite. For the space of a few minutes they remained motionless and breathless: each stroke of the axe found an echo in their breasts. Never in their lives had they felt such emotion. They followed the different phases of the siege with painful anxiety, but their greatest suffering, after all, was their powerlessness to do anything: they could not run to the assistance of those whom they believed in peril, but must stay where they were with their hands tied, and watch this onslaught of a crowd of furious soldiers.

All at once Philippe uttered a savage cry. He had just caught sight of Mathéus in the first rank of the besiegers and pointed him out to his brother.

"Ah! the wretch," he murmured bitterly, "I ought to

have let them hang him. He must have escaped, and is there to steal Joseph."

He was turning round, when another cry escaped him, and he pointed out to Marius a National Guard half hidden behind one of the trees on the square.

"Cazalis!" he exclaimed in a choking tone, and bringing his musket to his shoulder he continued:

"I have but one bullet left, and it shall be for him."

He was about to fire, but Marius tore the gun away from him saying:

"No unnecessary murder! We shall perhaps want that bullet. It's regular foul play."

At the same moment the door gave way beneath the blows of the axe.

"Let's go up higher," continued Marius.

They ascended to the third floor where a terrible sight awaited them. Exactly opposite was the window of the room where Fine and Joseph were. They saw the young woman wringing her hands, but were unable to cry out to her, amidst the tumult, that they were watching over her, and they were thus pale and trembling spectators of the abduction. When Fine went downstairs they followed her with their eyes, each window having a landing looking on to the street. Then, they saw her come up again, retreating before Mathéus. The next thing was Mathéus entering the room and tearing Joseph from the young woman's arms.

Marius returned Philippe his musket saying to him in a husky voice:

"I felt we should have need of that last cartridge."

Philippe brought the weapon to his shoulder, but the barrel shook in his hands. He was afraid of hitting his son, and so Mathéus was able to leave the room and commence going downstairs. When the villain passed before the window on the second floor landing, Philippe again felt himself shaking and could not pull the trigger.

"If you let him reach the street," murmured Marius, "we shall lose the child."

Then Philippe made a violent effort and recovered his customary coolness. He rested the barrel on the window sill and waited for Mathéus to pass again.

As the spy, who continued to descend, placed his foot on the first floor landing, the gun went off.

Sauvaire and Cadet, who were attending to Fine, raised their heads at the report, and perceived the two brothers leaning anxiously out of one of the windows on the other side of the street, endeavouring to find out the effect of the shot. The ex-master stevedore uttered a cry of surprise and satisfaction: he now knew the whereabouts of those whom he wished to protect. Cadet had a sudden presentiment of what had just occurred. Not having found the child in the room, he had at once thought of the man who had dashed past him on the stairs. He ran down as fast as he could, and found a strange sight awaiting him on the first floor.

Mathéus with his head smashed, was lying on the landing. In falling, he had opened his arms, and Joseph had slipped on to him without doing himself any injury. Philippe's bullet had lodged in the spy's skull passing close to the child's forehead. The latter recovering from the fainting fit which had helped Mathéus to carry him off easily, and resting half on the corpse began to cry bitterly. Cadet pushed aside the dead body and took the little boy in his arms. He had got half way upstairs again, when a sudden thought struck him, and going down again he searched the corpse, taking all the papers he could find on it. These, he was sure, would be useful.

When he returned to the room on the third floor, he found Sauvaire very much embarrassed, not knowing what remedy to administer to Fine who was still unconscious. The worthy man had confined himself to placing her on the bed, and Cadet put Joseph beside her. The child immediately clasped the young woman round the neck, nestling close up to her, quite happy at having his favourite place again, and brought her back to life with his caresses. She raised herself up and kissed Joseph passionately. It seemed to her that she was awakening from a frightful nightmare. All of a sudden she turned pale again.

"Where are Marius and Philippe?" she inquired. "Hide nothing from me, I beg of you."

When Cadet had pointed out the two brothers to her in the adjoining house she remained for a time motionless and quite absorbed with joy. All danger was not over for them, assuredly, but they lived, and for the moment she did not ask for anything more. Philippe and Marius also had good cause to be thankful. The former, after having discharged his gun, felt quite overcome, his eyes were bursting with tears and he uttered a cry of terror on seeing Mathéus and the child fall. For an instant, he felt as if he were choking, being unable to distinguish, through the smoke, whether he had struck his son or not. But when Marius heard the cries of the little one whom Cadet had just brought into the room, he exclaimed :

“Look !”

Then the two brothers followed the scene that was passing before them with profound happiness. They saw Fine and Joseph safe and sound, and said to each other that they ran little risk themselves, now that they had friends at hand to defend them. What gave them still further confidence was to see M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier go up into the room conducted there by M. de Gironse. These three gentlemen had followed the soldiers into the house in order to protect the young woman, and had no idea of the rapid drama that had just occurred there. The sight of the corpse on the staircase had made them run up hurriedly, and as soon as they reached the room, they heard what had happened from Fine and Cadet.

“This Cazalis is a scoundrel,” exclaimed M. de Gironse, “I’ll undertake to settle him. But before all, we must think of how we can shelter Marius and Philippe from the search of the troops. Indeed, there is no time to lose. Look !”

He pointed to the square. The position of the two brothers was becoming critical. The shot fired by Philippe had attracted the attention of the troops to the house where they had taken refuge, and sappers were already labouring the door with heavy blows from their axes.

“They have only one chance of safety,” said M. Martelly, “to try and escape by the roofs.”

"That's impossible," answered Cadet excitedly. "The house is much higher than those adjoining it. They're lost."

Fine felt herself going mad with despair again. All those in the room were racking their brains in vain, and the blows from the axe were becoming more and more violent. Suddenly M. de Grousse addressed Sauvaire, whom Cadet had presented to him as a friend.

"Cannot you make your men stop?" he inquired.

"Eh! no," exclaimed the captain in despair, "think you they obey so easily as that in the National Guard? wait a moment, wait a moment——"

Sauvaire opened his eyes quite wide, and it could be seen that some conception was being painfully evolved in his mind. All at once he said:

"I have an idea, come with me, Cadet."

The two men ran rapidly downstairs, and M. de Grousse and the others awaited their return with the most painful concern. At length they made their appearance, each carrying a bundle of clothes, and Cadet at once made signs to Marius and Philippe to open the window behind which they were concealing themselves. When they had understood what he meant, and conformed to his injunctions, the young man at the expense of considerable strength and dexterity, threw the two bundles over to them. The soldiers being busy below with the door, failed to see what was passing above.

Such was the idea that Sauvaire had conceived. Accompanied by Cadet, he had gone to an ambulance where about a dozen wounded National Guards were lying, and had there quietly stolen two complete uniforms amidst the confusion of amputations and the dressing of wounds.

Philippe and Marius had had all the gravity of their position brought home to them, and were on the point of deciding to attempt escape by the roofs, when they understood that their friends were busying themselves about their safety. As soon as they had the uniforms, they rushed up into the lofts where they attired themselves as National Guards, and had barely had time to do so and to throw their own clothes out of a window looking

on to a neighbouring courtyard, when they heard the front door giving way. They at once hid themselves; but, after a moment or two, cleverly mingled with the swarm of besiegers, whom they pretended to assist in the search, and eventually quietly walked out into the street where they found M. de Girousse and Sauvaire awaiting them. A short distance further off, on the square, were Cadet and Fine, with M. Martelly and Abbé Chastanier. The young woman, who was carrying little Joseph, had expressed the desire to return at once to the lodging on the Cours Bonaparte. As soon as she perceived Marius and Philippe in the street, she moved away looking behind her at every step. She had requested M. de Girousse to follow her with the two brothers.

Philippe and Marius warmly shook the ex-master stevedore's hand, unable to utter a word of thanks.

"All right, all right," murmured the worthy man, who was very much affected, "the least one can do is to assist one's friends, hang it! But we must have order, you see, before everything! The National Guard was only formed to preserve order. I'm the man for duty!"

And he began to cry out against the National Guards who were all in a flutter on the square, whilst M. de Girousse and the two brothers rapidly moved away.

As Sauvaire was trying to get his men together, he perceived M. de Cazalis behind a tree looking pale and anxious. He pretended not to see him and watched his movements. The ex-deputy could not understand the strange events that were passing around him. Since Mathéus had disappeared in the house, he awaited his return without being able to form any idea of what was occurring. When he saw Fine appear with little Joseph, when he perceived that his enemies were miraculously escaping from all his snares, he was agitated with sullen rage. What added to his anger was his being tortured by the idea that Mathéus had betrayed him.

"What can the scoundrel be doing?" he murmured. "He's sold himself to the Cayols and has helped them to escape."

At last, unable to restrain himself any longer, he made

up his mind to go and see what Mathéus could be doing in that house which he did not leave. Had he met him, he would have strangled him. On reaching the first floor landing he came in contact with his accomplice's corpse. Livid, terrified, and with his mouth wide open he stood and stared at it. Then, he abruptly stooped down and searched it. When he found the pockets were empty, he was in despair, and giving the dead man's body an angry kick he hurried rapidly away.

"I knew very well," thought Sauvaire, who had not lost sight of him, "that that bird of ill-omen must have had something to do with the abduction of the child."

The struggle, however, was over, and the troops victorious. It was about four o'clock. The resistance had been smart but of short duration. The principal leaders of the rioters had fled as soon as the barricades were captured, but a great many workmen were made prisoners. Those who were unable to escape by the roofs of the houses where they had taken refuge, were discovered in the cellars, cupboards, under the beds, in the chimneys and even in the wells, where they had thought they would have been in safety. When the houses had been searched, the six barricades were removed and the Place aux Œufs occupied by the military.

There was a family gathering at Marius' apartment in the evening. The young couple, Philippe and Joseph, had found themselves united again amidst tears of joy and tenderness. M. de Gousse troubled their happiness by pointing out that it was necessary to make Philippe disappear as soon as possible, if they did not want to see him despatched to one of the colonies. He offered to take him with him to Lambesc on the following day and hide him at one of his houses, and this suggestion was gratefully accepted. In the meanwhile Philippe was to stay with M. Martelly.

When he had left, M. de Gousse had a long conversation with Marius about M. de Cazalis. Cadet had handed his brother-in-law the papers he had found in the spy's pocket, and among them was the letter which the latter had insisted on his master giving him, and in which he was guaranteed

a sum of money for Joseph's abduction. This document was a terrible arm. Henceforth the Cayols would be able to make Blanche's uncle disgorge. But Marius thought the best thing would be not to claim anything from M. de Cazalis, confining themselves to preserving the letter as a constant threat and so restrain the ex-deputy from taking any steps against Philippe. A scandal, he thought, would only reflect on the whole family.

M. de Girousse expressed his warm approbation of this disinterested attitude and undertook to see M. de Cazalis personally. The next day he called on him and had an interview that lasted two hours. No one ever knew the tenor of the conversation between the two noblemen, but from the loud, angry tones that reached the servants' hall, it is supposed that M. de Girousse must have bitterly reproached the former deputy with his unworthy behaviour and have crushed him with the heel of an upright man, in order to wring from him the necessary formal promise to desist from further persecution. It was thus that the nobility, in regard to this matter, washed their dirty linen in private. When M. de Girousse withdrew, the servants noticed that their master accompanied him humbly to the door, with lips firmly set together and pale cheeks.

An hour later the old Count and Philippe were driving along the road to Lambesc in a cabriolet.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DUEL.

A YEAR after the sanguinary events just related, the shadow of death passed again over Marseilles and the entire city was touched by it. It was no longer a question of a few dozen wounded: people were struck down by hundreds. Civil war had been followed by the cholera.

A history of the numerous and terrible epidemics that have decimated Marseilles, would be a most painful one. The position of the city in a warm climate, its constant

connection with Asia, the filth of its old streets, everything seems to fatally indicate it as a hot-bed of infection where contagious diseases spread with frightful rapidity. It is threatened as soon as ever summer comes round. At the least negligence, if by mishap the scourge is allowed to enter the city, it never fails to gain all the coast line, and, from there to spread throughout France. The epidemic of 1849 was relatively benign. It broke out about the middle of August, and it is stated that it was not serious until a convoy of invalided troops were landed from Rome and Algiers. Fifty of these soldiers succumbed, it is said, on the night following their arrival. From that moment the disease had taken firm hold in Marseilles.

Amidst the outbursts of political passion at that time, the government of the Republic was bitterly reproached with a decree dated August 10, which authorized vessels from the Levant to enter the Port on a simple declaration from the medical man on board. This decree suppressing quarantine, laid the city open to the germs of the disease. The incubation was rather slow. By the end of August there were one hundred and ninety-six victims, but in the following month the mortality was terrible, no less than twelve hundred persons succumbing. The epidemic died out in October, after nearly five hundred more people had been added to the death list.

The inhabitants were seized with panic from the very outbreak of the disease, and there was a general stampede. The news that the cholera had again visited the city ran from quarter to quarter like a train of gunpowder. A man had died in frightful agony, and the case was forthwith multiplied, old women affirming they had seen more than a hundred burials go by. The people spoke in an undertone of poison, accusing the wealthy of having infected the water at all the pumps, and these statements increased the panic. A poor wretch who was drinking at the fountain on the Cours was nearly massacred because a workman pretended he had seen him throw something into the water. Fright produced terrible effect upon the lively imagination of the crowd. The inhabitants believed a foul vapour was passing over the city, and the women

walked about the streets with handkerchiefs pressed to their lips. Daring neither to drink nor breathe, the Marseillaise hardly existed.

The city was deserted. All who could run away did so. The country houses in the vicinity were crowded with refugees. There were even families who went and camped out as far as the hills of the Nerthe, preferring to live in the open air under a tent, to remaining in a place where they encountered death at the corner of every street. The wealthy, those who had residences outside or could rent them, were the first to leave; then the employed, the workmen, the bread-winners who compromised their every-day existence by abandoning the work shops, lost courage in the presence of the scourge, and a great number of them preferred to fly and run the risk of starving, so that Marseilles, little by little, became dismal and empty.

There remained only men of courage who either resisted the epidemic or regarded it with contempt, and the poor wretches who were forced to remain at their posts in spite of their fright. If there were acts of cowardice, such as the sudden disappearance of doctors and functionaries, there were also examples of energy and self-sacrifice. Offices where assistance could be obtained, had been opened in the most severely-visited quarters, from the commencement, and there men devoted themselves, day and night, to the relief of the crazy population who were dying of fright.

Marius was among the first to offer his services, but in presence of the tears of Fine and Joseph, he had to give way and consent to leave Marseilles. He knew his wife, she would have remained at his side, and shared the danger, and the child would then have run the same risk. The thought that Fine and Joseph might die in his arms had struck Marius with terror, and he had ran away, trembling for the safety of those he loved.

The family found refuge at a house which they had rented in the Saint Just quarter close to the old country residence of the Cayols. It was then the end of August. Philippe had remained with M. de Grousse at

Lambesc for twelve months, and during that time had not set foot in Marseilles, waiting till the days of June were forgotten. Indeed, he was not disturbed. Inquiries were made about him at first, but powerful influence having been exerted on his behalf, further search was abandoned.

As soon as he learned that the young household was in the suburbs of Marseilles, he bade good-bye to M. de Girousse and hurried off to see his son. He felt weary at Lambesc and soon convinced his brother that he would be able to lodge with him without being guilty of the least imprudence. The cholera had driven all recollection of the rioting out of peoples' minds; and no one thought of going to arrest him at a long league from Marseilles.

A delightful existence commenced. While the disease was ravaging and striking terror into the city, the inmates of the little country house in the Saint Just quarter were enjoying happy hours and charming tranquillity. They drifted into egotism in spite of themselves; after the terrible blows they had received, they bathed in happiness. It was their turn not to suffer. They went out but little, finding the little enclosure surrounding the house, quite large enough for fresh air and exercise. A fortnight passed very peacefully, then one morning Philippe, who had been dreaming all night of the past, announced that he was going for a walk. He went out in the direction of the mill of Saint Joseph, following the road he had often passed along before to meet Blanche.

When he came to the little pine wood behind the country house, he thought of that day in May, that afternoon of folly, which had thrown Blanche into his arms and been the misfortune of his existence. That souvenir was both sweet and bitter. He recalled his youth, his mad, burning passion, and at the same time the tears and grief of the only woman he had ever loved. Two great tears rolled down his cheeks without his feeling them. As he wiped them away, and gazed around him, seeking for the spot where Blanche had sat by his side, he all of a sudden perceived M. de Cazalis, standing motionless in the centre of a path with his terrible eyes fixed upon him.

The ex-deputy had been among the first to leave Mar-

seilles. He had taken refuge at his country residence in the Saint Joseph quarter, where he was living alone, and was quite ferocious with suppressed irritation. Since his interview with M. de Girousse he had fallen into a state of despondency which was broken at distant intervals, by frightful outbursts of passion. Although a year had passed, he still heard the old Count's words of indignation and contempt tinkling in his ears. These words were choking him and he would fain have relieved himself by wreaking vengeance on someone. Understanding that it would be impossible to pick a quarrel with M. de Girousse, he ardently desired to find himself face to face with Philippe, so to end the matter one way or another, either killing his enemy or being killed by him.

He thought no more about the money, he had lost his appetite for luxury and power. Since he had heard that the Cayols abandoned all claim to his niece's fortune it became a matter of indifference to him. He now had but one great desire at heart: to wash away M. de Girousse's expressions of contempt with the blood of an enemy. And lo! all at once, he met Philippe at a deserted spot, in the middle of this wood which belonged to him. He had gone out, his head bent down, seeking a means to attain his end, and chance placed him face to face with the very person he wished to meet to satisfy his vengeance.

The two men stared for a moment at each other in silence. They had both stooped, as if to be ready to spring at each other's throats. Then each felt ashamed at finding himself in the attitude of a wild animal, when they wished to act toward one another as civilized animals.

"I have been seeking you for a year," said M. de Cazalis at last. "You are in my way and I'm in yours. One of us must disappear."

"I'm quite of your opinion," answered Philippe.

"I have weapons in that house. Wait for me. In a few seconds I'll be with you."

"No. We cannot fight so. If I were to kill you they would accuse me of murdering you. We must have witnesses."

"And where shall we find them?"

"In a couple of hours both of us can go to Marseilles and be back again with two of our friends."

"Good. The meeting is for noon at this same spot."

"Yes, at this same spot."

They had spoken in a stern voice and without the least insult. The provocation was natural, as if it were, a matter agreed upon long before.

Philippe went immediately to Marseilles, resolving to keep his brother in ignorance of what was about to occur, for he felt the encounter necessary, and would not run the risk of an obstacle being placed in the way of it.

As he was going down the Cours, he met Sauvaire tearing along.

"Don't stop me," said the ex-master stevedore to him. "I'm returning to the Aygalades in great haste. The men are falling like flies here. There were eighty deaths yesterday."

Philippe, without listening to him, told him he had a duel on hand and relied on him. When he had named his adversary Sauvaire exclaimed:

"I'm your man, and I would not be sorry to see that scoundrel's brains blown out."

They called together on M. Martelly, whose courageous behaviour was causing universal admiration in Marseilles. The ship-owner listened to Philippe gravely, and thought as he did, that the duel was necessary and inevitable.

"I am at your disposal," he answered simply.

The three men took a cab, and at a little before noon entered the pine wood where they had to wait for M. de Cazalis. At length he arrived. After having ran through Marseilles in search of a couple of friends in vain, he had made up his mind to go to a barracks where two obliging sergeants consented to act as witnesses. As soon as the cab that brought them had been sent to stand near that of Philippe, the paces were counted and the weapons loaded, rapidly and in silence, and without any attempt being made at reconciliation. Never before had preparations for a duel been more prompt or simple.

When the principals had been placed face to face, Philippe whom fortune had favoured, raised his arm ready

to fire, but he all at once felt a presentiment and shuddered. Before M. de Cazalis had arrived, he had been looking in a melancholy way at the pines which surrounded him and beneath which he had courted in days gone by. Chance is at times cruel. The scenery was the same, the vast heavens expanded with the same limpidity, the country displayed an horizon as soft and peaceful. When Philippe raised his pistol he thought he remembered that he was on the very spot where Blanche had given him her first kiss, and that remembrance caused him singular trouble. He fancied he heard his heart murmur:

“Where I have sinned, there shall I be punished.”

He pressed the trigger with a trembling hand. The bullet, badly aimed, sped, and broke a branch of one of the pines.

M. de Cazalis, in his turn, raised his weapon. He aimed with contracted features and flaming eyes. Sauvaire and Martelly, looking very pale, waited. Philippe with his body slightly sideways, looked courageously at the pistol threatening him, but in truth he did not see it, he was thinking in spite of himself, of Blanche, and he heard all his being crying louder than before:

“Where I have sinned, there shall I be punished.”

The pistol went off. Philippe fell.

M. Martelly and Sauvaire ran up to him. He had sunk down on the grass with his hand to his right side.

“You are touched?” inquired the ex-master stevedore in an unsteady voice.

“I am killed,” murmured Philippe. “This spot was bound to be fatal to me.”

And he fainted. The two witnesses consulted together for an instant, whilst staunching his wound. In their haste they had not thought of bringing a doctor with them. It was imperative to transport the wounded man to Marseilles as rapidly as possible.

“Listen,” said M. Martelly, “we’ll put him in a cab and I’ll take him to the hospital, for he’ll be more promptly attended to there than anywhere else. In the meanwhile you run and tell his brother. Act so that the young woman and child do not suspect anything.”

Both were deeply affected, it seemed that they were losing one of theirs. Sauvaire ran off towards Saint Just, while M. Martelly, assisted by the sergeants, carried Philippe to the vehicle. M. de Cazalis had retired, acting the indifferent, but with his heart bounding with intense delight.

The ship-owner instructed the driver to go slowly. For nearly an hour that the sad journey lasted, he supported the unconscious wounded man's pale, vacillating head. He had placed his handkerchief to the wound to stop the blood; but he saw the patient so weak that he feared he would never be able to get him to the hospital alive.

They arrived at last. When M. Martelly stated that he brought a wounded man, he was answered rather abruptly that all the wards were full. At length Philippe was received; only there was no room and he was taken into a cholera ward, the doctor who had seen him on his admission, shaking his head and saying they could put him anywhere, as he was beyond all danger from the disease.

M. Martelly accompanied him, for he would not go away until Marius arrived. The ward into which he entered had a sinister look, and extended in the dim light to a considerable length; the two rows of white beds were set against the walls like tombs, and on them one could perceive the rigidity of the bodies in the furious agony of death. Patients afflicted with the disease yelled and distorted themselves in this long cold room. Sisters of Mercy—slim, delicate women—moved softly round the beds assisting the doctors in their work.

M. Martelly had seated himself near the mattress on which Philippe had been placed, face to face with death, and watched the Sisters of Mercy who were quietly and compassionately attending to the dying. He noticed one, a short distance away from him, who was comforting with her tender words, the last moments of an old man. The face of this patient, although contracted in the death agony, did not seem unknown to him. He drew near and recognised with pain, that it was Abbé Chastanier. The priest was dying, a victim to his consummate charity.

Since the commencement of the epidemic he had not taken an hour's repose; day and night he ascended to the garrets visiting poor families struck down by the disease; he had parted with all he possessed to give help to the unfortunate, and when he had nothing left but the clothes he wore, he had gone begging to the rich. As he was leaving a house in the old town that morning, he had been struck down with a violent attack of cholera in the street and hurried off to the hospital, where for the last two hours he had been enduring the most atrocious agony with exemplary fortitude.

When M. Martelly approached him, his eyes were already covered with a film and he was unable to see the ground, but he nevertheless recognised the ship-owner. He smiled, but could not utter a single word. Then, raising a hand, he pointed to heaven.

After he was dead M. Martelly gazed at him for a moment and then returned to seat himself beside Philippe who continued as rigid as a corpse. Just then, the young Sister of Mercy who had knelt for an instant beside Abbé Chastanier's body came forward to see if she could not render the wounded man some assistance. She had hardly glanced at Philippe's face when all her features were distorted with emotion. With her eyes fixed on the young man and her breast heaving, she stood there, lost in painful contemplation.

At that moment Marius entered the room followed by Sauvaire. Seeing his brother extended stiff and livid, he sobbed aloud. The news of the duel and Philippe's wound had come upon him so abruptly, that he was quite stupid.

As soon as he was face to face with the wounded man, he asked violently for a physician and insisted on the patient being saved. The doctor who was in the ward, touched by this outburst of grief, consented to sound the wound again. Marius felt a burn in his inside when his brother uttered a plaintive cry on feeling the touch of the instrument. That cry made the young Sister of Mercy shudder. As she came forward Marius caught sight of her.

"You here!" he murmured angrily, "ah! I ought to

have expected you would be present at the last moments of the man whom your love brought to misfortune. You are the worthy niece of your uncle who has just killed my brother."

The young Sister of Mercy had joined her hands. She looked humbly and beseechingly at Marius, half choked by anguish, and unable to reply.

"Pardon me," continued the young man immediately, "I know not what I do. Do not remain there. Philippe might see you on opening his eyes. We must avoid causing him violent emotion. Is it not so?"

He spoke as a child wandering in his mind. When he had recognised Blanche in the costume of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, he really thought he saw a phantom rise up before him. She reminded him of a whole past full of suffering.

At the outbreak of the epidemic, Blanche had begged as a favour to be allowed to work in the hospital at Marseilles. Perhaps she hoped to die there. Her devotedness was the admiration of all. She lived in the midst of death with the courage and abnegation of a martyr. To have seen her bending over the frightful features of the dying, no one would have guessed that her childhood had been so weak and delicate and her birth so illustrious. On several occasions they wanted to send her away, telling her she had discharged her tribute, but she had obtained permission to remain, by beseeching the authorities to allow her to do so. For a month she had been defying death, and death had respected her.

Abbé Chastanier's last agony, and the sight of Philippe lying inanimate before her, had just given her a shock that broke her courage. She was staggering and all her human feelings had returned to her. She retreated a few steps, obedient to Marius' gesture, while the doctor completed the dressing of the wound. Philippe at last opened his eyes and looked round about him with an expression of lively astonishment, but on seeing his brother, he remembered all.

Marius, mastering his tears with a violent effort, bent over him.

"I don't see Joseph," Philippe said to him, in a voice as faint as one's breath. "Where is he?"

"He is coming," answered Marius.

"Immediately, is it not so? I want to see him, immediately, immediately."

He closed his eyes again. Marius had told a falsehood, he had run off without telling Fine and Joseph what had happened, in the desire of delaying their despair for at least a few hours, but now, in face of his brother's request, he would have given all he possessed in this world, to have brought the child with him.

"Shall I go and fetch the little one?" asked Sauvaire, who felt extremely uneasy amidst all these cholera patients, and yet dared not run away. Marius accepted the offer at once, and the ex-master stevedore ran off immediately. Philippe had no doubt heard what had been said for he re-opened his eyes and thanked his brother with a look. As he turned his head, his face became overspread with a look of happy ecstasy: he had just perceived Blanche, who had drawn near on hearing the sound of his voice.

"Am I dead?" he murmured. "Oh! dear, tender vision." And he fainted again.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PUNISHMENT.

WHEN the vehicle carrying away Philippe had gone some distance from the scene of the encounter, M. de Cazalis warmly thanked the sergeants who had assisted him as witnesses.

"Gentlemen," he said to them, "excuse the trouble I have given you, and kindly allow me to drive you back to Marseilles."

The sergeants made some difficulty, saying that they could very well return to town alone, but M. de Cazalis insisted, the truth being, that he wanted to know if Philippe was really dead, for he dared not rejoice until his enemy had been nailed down in his coffin.

As the cab in which the ex-deputy and his two witnesses were seated, was coming out of the Rue d'Aix, it was stopped by the solemn procession conducting the statue of Notre Dame de la Garde back to her church. This Virgin is the guardian saint of Marseilles, and when a misfortune overshadows the city, the inhabitants carry it along their streets, prostrating themselves before it and beseeching the Virgin to implore the clemency of the Almighty on their behalf.

M. de Cazalis was irritated at this obstruction for he was kept waiting for a long quarter of an hour whilst dying of impatience to get news of Philippe, and at the bottom of his heart wished the procession to the deuce. But at the very minute when the statue of the virgin passed before him, he all at once felt a mortal shiver which descended into his very bowels. He leant on the shoulder of one of the sergeants, growing paler and paler, and suddenly sank all of a heap to the bottom of the vehicle, uttering plaintive moans. He had been brought down by a violent attack of the prevalent disease. He had escaped the hand of Philippe, and it was the cholera that had undertaken his punishment. The two sergeants had sprang from the cab, and the crowd, who soon ascertained that they were in presence of a cholera patient, fled from the vehicle, aghast!

"Drive him at once to the hospital," cried one of the sergeants to the coachman.

The man whipped up his horse, and the cab entering the old town, which the procession had just left, was in a few minutes before the hospital where two attendants carried M. de Cazalis into the cholera ward. Only one empty bed remained, and he was placed beside Philippe.

When the ex-deputy who was already turning black, was brought in, Marius and M. Martelly, who recognised him, had stepped back affrighted, but M. de Cazalis did not immediately notice what neighbours chance had given him. The disease was racking him most terribly. He was lost. In one of his convulsions he raised himself and at last perceived Philippe, who was extended on the adjoining bed still unconscious. Then he reflected that

he was dying himself, and would not have enough life to enjoy his vengeance, and at that thought he fell back on his bed literally howling with rage.

"Save me!" he shouted out, "I want to live. Oh! I am wealthy, I will reward you!"

And he distorted himself in the most frightful suffering exclaiming that they were tearing out his entrails.

Philippe in the meanwhile, had opened his eyes. The hoarse voice of his enemy, had momentarily drawn him from the lethargy that was gaining possession of him, and raising his head, he stared at M. de Cazalis as if in a trance. When the latter saw the wounded man resuscitated and looking at him, dreamily, his rage and terror increased.

"He is not dead!" he yelled. "Ah! the wretch will live, and I'm dying."

They contemplated each other. Hatred brought them together even in death. Suddenly, they heard a celestial voice exclaim amidst the silence:

"Give each other the hand, I insist on it. One must not go into eternity in anger."

They raised their heads, and perceived Blanche beside them standing erect in her grey gown. She seemed taller. Philippe joined his hands, without speaking. He thought himself already on the other side, where he had often dreamed of finding his sweetheart. His dream continued.

M. de Cazalis clenched his teeth, when he heard these words of peace. The sight of his niece exasperated him.

"Who brought you here?" he cried. "You knew I was going to die, and came to enjoy the sight of my death."

"Listen," continued Blanche, "the Almighty is going to judge you. Do not appear before Him with a soul black with hatred. For pity's sake, give Philippe your hand."

"No, a thousand times no! I would sooner be damned than reconciled to him. When I held him at the end of my pistol barrel, I knew he would die. Don't think you'll save him, and take him back for a lover."

He blasphemed, shook his fist at Heaven, vomitted foul words upon his niece and Philippe, but the disease was gaining possession of him, he felt himself already

turning cold, and the horror of his end made him like a mad animal, that was powerless to bite.

Blanche had drawn back. She leant against the bed of the wounded man, who continued gazing at her with great tenderness; and bending towards him, she said in a gentle tone:

“Will you offer that man your hand?”

Philippe smiled. “Yes,” he said, “I forgive him and would like him to forgive me also. I want to live with you in Heaven. Tell me, will you not pray to your God to admit me to your Paradise?”

Blanche, very much affected, took the dying man’s hand, which she felt trembling in hers.

“Give me yours,” she said to M. de Cazalis.

“No, never, never!” shouted the cholera patient amidst a convulsion. “I don’t want to live with you in your Heaven. I prefer all the flames of Hell. Go. Never, never!”

He had clasped his hands together, and was wildly distorting his arms. As he bellowed: “Never, never!” he was seized with a spasm and expired. His body remained in its frightful position.

Blanche had turned away her head in horror. When she looked down on Philippe again, she saw that he, also, was dying. He gently pressed her hand. His eyes had become clear, his lips wore a faint smile. He imagined he had been dead a long time and thought no more of his brother who was there, or of his son, whom he had been inquiring for.

“Tell me,” he murmured, without making the least struggle against death, “you will take me with you, won’t you?”

And he died.

At that very moment Fine and Joseph entered the room. Marius closed his brother’s eyes. Fine, in despair, went and knelt down. The poor little child, standing alone at the foot of the bed, was unable to understand, and quietly sobbed.

Since Joseph had entered the room, Blanche had been gazing at him in bewilderment. All at once she saw

he was in danger. She kissed Philippe's hand which she had retained in hers, and then abruptly caught the child up in her arms and ran off with him. M. de Martelly had to lead Marius and Fine away, but as Marius was about to retire, he heard one of the dying calling to him.

"Don't you remember me?" a woman asked. "Have you forgotten the wretched Armande? I had vowed not to see you until I had obtained my pardon. I made myself a servant in this hospital and am dying. Will you give me your hand?"

Marius grasped the poor creature's hand, and it was only then that he discovered where he was. Overcome by grief, he had not looked round about him before. The cholera ward now appeared to him in all its horror. M. Martelly pointed out the corpse of Abbé Chastanier and from that moment he seemed to see Death standing erect in the centre of the room, with his immense arms extended. Thrusting Fine before him, he went out staggering with giddiness.

It was not until they were on the staircase that they perceived Joseph had disappeared. They called him, inquired for him, searched for him in every corner. At length he was discovered at the bottom of an inner courtyard. A Sister of Mercy, of the order of Saint Vincent de Paul was holding him in her arms and passionately kissing him.

The following day Marius, while returning from his brother's funeral, learnt that Sister Blanche had been carried off by an attack of cholera during the night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EPILOGUE.

TEN years have passed.

M. Martelly has retired to a villa he had built on the rocks of Endoume, and resides there with his sister. The only thing that makes him feel sad is to see that Liberty

is a plant that does not thrive in France; he feels sure he will die before the advent of Democracy.

Marius has succeeded him at the house of business, in the Rue de la Darse. Thanks to the fortune Joseph came into at the death of his mother and M. de Cazalis, he has been able to extend his operations considerably, and the ship-owners Cayol, are now one of the principal firms in Marseilles.

The family has grown older amidst the love and happiness it had waited for so long. Fine spreads her gay and tender serenity around her, and her brother Cadet is one of the most active partners in the house.

Joseph is now a tall youth of nineteen, possessing the delicate beauty of Blanche with Philippe's passionate energy. He has just completed his studies, and expects to work with his uncle who has had the care of his fortune.

Sometimes when the family is assembled of an evening they talk over the past, and those dear phantoms, Blanche and Philippe, are brought back to life; but the tears that are then shed have no bitterness about them. Peace has come, and recollections savour of the sweetness of a sad and far-off song.

Joseph goes every year to Lambesc to open the shooting season with M. de Girousse. The Count is very old, but he still possesses the lively and original mind of his youth. Besides, time does not hang heavily on his hands, for he has started a large factory.

"Ah!" he often says to the young man, "if you only heard what the nobility of the department say about me! I am a Jacobite, I have made a misalliance by espousing industry. I really regret not having been born a workman, for if I had been, I should not have passed fifty years of my life, dragging out a weary and useless existence in this corner of France."

But Joseph's great friend is the worthy Sauvaire. The former master-stevedore, a prey to rheumatism, has nevertheless preserved his triumphant manner. On sunny days he still displays his vanity on the Cannebière, and honestly believes that all the girls he meets suddenly fall in love with him.

Joseph seems to him too serious.

"Look here," he says to him, leaning on his arm, "one must amuse oneself in this world. In my time we used to laugh from morn till eve. Ah! by Jove! what fun I had! All the pretty women in the city were under my protection. You ask your uncle. Remind him of Clairon. What a lot of money that girl cost me!"

And then in a lower tone, he adds the following phrase which he delights in repeating:

"It was the priests who took her from me."

THE END.

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